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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,

ACCORDING TO THE FOUR EVANGELISTS,

BY THE ABBOT OF MONTE CASSINO.

EDITED BY

THE BISHOP OF BRECHIN.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

WHEN I visited Monte Cassino in the spring of last year, the abbot, Don Carlo M. de Vera D'Aragona, a singularly interesting and graceful personage, put into my hands the original of the little treatise which, in an English dress, is now presented to the public. I saw at once that it was likely to supply a want in our devotions during the Holy Week, as it contained short and affective observations on every verse of the Passion-Gospels. Those who are accustomed to attend Church regularly during the Holy Week, in which the Gospel each recurring day brings the stupendous history of the suffering of the GOD-Man before us in a way almost stunning in its tremendous repetition, will find much help from the observations, which the Author in his beautiful preface tells us "are drawn, for the most part, from the holy Fathers, who are to us the interpreters of

Scripture and expounders of the Church's meaning." And they who have not the privilege of constant services, will find very excellent heads of spiritual reflection in the short remarks of our Author. To the young, for whom the work was originally intended, it will prove an exceeding boon. Of course human thought fails to enter into the depths of the unsearchable ways of the mystery of the Passion, as human love fathoms not the abyss of tenderness in the Heart of GOD. Still there is much here that is edifying and satisfying.

I beg to record the expression of my thanks to my two translators, who have given with accuracy and spirit the sense of the original.

A. P. F.

Lent, 1866.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

TO THE YOUNG STUDENTS OF THE ABBEY OF MONTE CASSINO.

As the salvation of languishing humanity was effected upon earth through the Passion of CHRIST, so there is no sweeter or more substantial comfort for afflicted souls than the memory of those ineffable sorrows. And who has not been afflicted in his turn in this valley of tears? Be our efforts what they may to wear a smile, we shall nevertheless frequently surprise a tear upon the cheek. Let us adorn ourselves with roses, the heart will bleed more copiously pierced with their thorns. What age, what condition of life but has its own peculiar sorrows? Ye then, young men, in the spring time of your life, support its passing storms, for even the calm of your souls is at times ruffled by disgusts and disappointments. The natural impatience of your years often revolts under the yoke of

obedience, which is indeed nothing else than the protection of inexperience, and substitute for liberty. For you, then, is there need of comfort, and such comfort as shall not enervate you, but which shall rather give you strength for the long journey that lies before you. Such comfort does the holy Church, our good mother, offer you, O young Christians, in the solemn memorial of the Passion of your Redeemer, which she celebrates in the days preceding Easter. She ever sets before us the Man of Sorrows as our Exemplar to be kept ever in view; but during the week which is worthily styled Holy, she perpetually recounts in her liturgy, in her prayers, in her canticles, in her lamentations, that mournful story; so that, to the exclusion of every other rite, of every other preoccupation, it seems as though she would bring each minute particular of it to our memories, I had almost said before our bodily eyes, even the doleful spectacle of the death of CHRIST.

To assimilate the mind to the loving mysteries of those holy days, to make it share in the instructions of our mother, the Church; to explain her symbols and her ceremonies, to exhibit the correspondence between the prophecies and

their fulfilment; the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, each invoked in turn by the Church, and forming around the Cross of the GOD-Man two hearts in unison, which, according to S. Augustine, perpetually echo His glories: to exhibit all these and unfold their meaning, under the guidance of the Church herself, who ever directs our way, opening out the successive parts of the loving scheme of our redemption: such is the work which, with GOD'S blessing and assistance, we propose to ourselves for your special instruction. Accept, then, for the present, as a foretaste of this work, as it were an earnest of our intentions, these short reflections upon the Passion, drawn for the most part from the holy fathers, who are to us interpreters of Scripture and expounders of the Church's meaning. When, with this little book in your hand, you shall follow the modulations of the sacred chants with which the ministers of the sanctuary accompany the mournful story, in those intervals of time which the length of the rhythm leaves free for meditation and the effusions of the heart, you may thus have, as it were, a pattern according to which the mind and the heart may arise towards the stupendous mystery of the Cross.

Then shall you understand that the memory of CHRIST'S Passion is not a kind of devotion fit only for women and the cloistered, but is food adapted to the strongest souls. For that JESUS, Who is so tender to children, and reveals Himself to the poor in spirit, is the same JESUS the uncreated Wisdom and eternal Word of GOD, the true Light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world, and incites every heart to the most noble affections and most generous deeds. He is the Word, at once most simple and most profound, most clear and most mysterious. Listen to that word uttered from the pulpit of the Cross; keep it in your hearts: thus shall CHRIST, Who gladdens your childhood, be the CHRIST Who shall comfort your youth, your manhood, and your old age, until there be no more shadows, but CHRIST reveal Himself as the Rewarder, Who will dry every tear from the eyes of His faithful ones, even there where there shall be no more sorrow or crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

Grace and peace be with you all, my young friends, and increase of the knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION
OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Palm Sunday.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to S. Matthew.

Tribulations, anguish, suffering; such is the history of the life of Christ, the history of the life of each one of us. Let us not deceive ourselves, this earth is but the valley of tears, the kingdom of sorrow.

"At that time said Jesus to His disciples."

I also give myself to be Thy disciple. O my Jesus! speak Thy word to me also, for it is life eternal.

"Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified."

This was the last Passover of the Mosaic law. The Son of Man given into the hand of

His enemies and crucified, was the true Lamb of our new passover.

"Then assembled together the chief priests and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take JESUS by subtilty, and kill Him."

Heinous and vile counsel! A nation with such chief priests is already ripe for malediction.

"But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people."

Not from reverence for the feast day, but from fear of the people, for JESUS had passed by, benefiting and healing all, and even they could not suppose this people to be so ungrateful as later it proved itself.

"Now when JESUS was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His Head, as He sat at meat."

This woman prefigured the Gentiles. Let us, heirs of the Gentiles, approach with her to JESUS, and let us anoint His Head with the precious ointment of our good works.

"But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor."

How desperately wicked is human nature

after sin! Not even the good done by our brethren escapes our detraction; but we persuade ourselves (at least) that we should have known how to do better!

"When JESUS understood it He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman?"

JESUS hears our murmurings, though the lips utter them not, and reads in our hearts intentions sometimes unknown to ourselves.

"For she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you, but Me ye have not always."

Let us remember these words when our LORD comes to visit our soul in the Holy Communion. Let all other cares, even holy ones, give place then to this one alone, to perfume His body with the balm of love, for Him we have not always with us.

"For in that she hath poured this ointment on My Body, she did it for My burial. Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

GOD is faithful. Many centuries have elapsed and many will yet pass away, and each year on this day throughout all the world solemn mention is made of the loving act of this poor woman.

"Then one of the twelve called Judas Iscariot,

went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?"

Did Judas then truly wish a few moments before to give the price of the ointment to the poor, if now he does not hesitate for a few pence to betray his Master? Frequently our worst passions clothe themselves with the cloak of charity; it cannot however accommodate itself for long to their shoulders, and on falling from them it reveals their infamy to all.

"And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."

How often have we also madly sought an opportunity to betray JESUS? We watch for time and place to withdraw ourselves from the crowd, to hide the traces of our own sins. But GOD is in Israel!

"Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to JESUS, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?"

The LORD of the universe has not on earth a fit place where to eat the Passover, nor do His disciples know where they are to prepare it for Him. Let the poor be consoled by their resemblance to CHRIST.

"And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at

hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with My disciples."

Oh! blessed he at whose house the Master went to keep the Passover! Oh! blessed I also, to whom He sends word through His minister that His time is at hand, and that He purposes to keep the Passover in my heart!

"And the disciples did as JESUS had appointed them, and they made ready the Passover."

It is necessary to prepare the Passover before the coming of CHRIST: is the house of my soul ready and fitted for this visit?

"Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve; and as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me."

Merciful LORD! the showing Thyself conscious of the treason was a lesson to the traitor: a lesson of Thine Omniscience from which nothing is hidden; of Thy Long-suffering which does not weary of waiting for him.

"And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, LORD, is it I?"

The others were innocent, and yet they inquired if they were to be the guilty ones. Let each one be thus humble, and see that he fall not.

"And He answered and said, He that dippeth

his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me."

How many of us extend the hand to the same food with which the Redeemer is nourished, partake of the same bread and of the same cup, and yet plot treason in their heart!

"The Son of Man goeth, as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born."

I also have betrayed Thee, O Son of Man. But I will not, hardening my heart, as did Judas, deserve to hear, It had been good for him if he had not been born. I confess my sin against myself, and I rely upon, nay I rejoice in Thy mercy.

"Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I?"

He adds impudence to treason, and calling Him Master, insinuates in a way the impossibility of so much ingratitude in a disciple.

"He said unto him, Thou hast said."

Judas need doubt no longer. The Master has read in his heart, and knows all. But he is already in the condition of the reprobate, who when he has fallen to the lowest depths, becomes reckless.

"And as they were eating, JESUS took bread,

and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said: Take, eat; this is My body."

Here is the greatest of the miracles worked by CHRIST. In order to save us, He did not shrink from descending into the virginal womb of Mary: to nourish us, He does not disdain to enter into the heart of each of us, miserable sinners, and to unite Himself with our souls.

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is My Blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

For all indeed shall that most precious Blood be shed according to the will of the Redeemer, but all shall not avail themselves of it, through defect of individual co-operation. I pray Thee, account me, O my JESUS, in the number of those many, who will receive remission of sins through Thy blood!

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My FATHER'S kingdom."

I pray Thee, account me, O my JESUS, in the number of those blessed ones, who will be called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb, in Thy FATHER'S kingdom; to whom Thou wilt give to drink of the new fruit of the vine, and whom Thou wilt feed with hidden manna.

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went

out into the Mount of Olives. Then saith JESUS unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."

Galilee signifies, literally, transmigration. If we desire to find CHRIST, we also must pass from the life of the flesh to that of the Spirit, in which He preceded us when, at His Resurrection, the corruptible body put on incorruption.

"Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended."

Thus accounting himself better than others; this too great self-confidence is a harbinger of an approaching fall.

"JESUS said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice."

Not once, but thrice, will he sin who boasts of himself. This is the cause of our continual shortcomings.

"Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee."

How many good resolutions have not I also made to die sooner than deny CHRIST, and yet have afterwards denied Him without even hesi-

tating? The groundwork of humility has ever been wanting.

"Likewise also said all the disciples."

And yet all did equally abandon Him, and fly at the moment of danger.

"Then cometh JESUS with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

He withdraws Himself to pray. He who does not recollect himself before prayer, he who does not prepare his soul before he prays, is as a man who tempts GOD.

"And He took with Him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

"Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me."

May the sorrowfulness of CHRIST be the gentle balm that shall allay all the sadness of our souls! This latter can never be as intense as His sorrow, even unto death, such as to produce the agony of death.

"And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying."

He prays with His face prostrate on the ground. Shall we disdain to bend the knees before the Presence of GOD in prayer?

"O My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup

pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Let us learn the true manner of praying. Not all our wishes are good, nor are all our good wishes opportune. Let us ask, but commit ourselves to the goodwill of our Heavenly FATHER, Who knows and wills what is for our advantage.

"And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter."

To the sin of presumption the disciples add that of sloth. The Master had warned them of the approaching temptation, and yet they yield to sleep.

"What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And precisely because the flesh is weak, and we all have sad experience that it is so, it is necessary to strengthen it by watching and prayer; that is, with human diligence and effort on the one hand, and on the other with the Divine assistance, which is ever ready for those who invoke it.

"He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My FATHER, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done."

We also say, many times a day, in the

LORD's Prayer, "Thy will be done." But do we say it with our hearts?

"And He came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."

And we are so easily wearied of repeating the same prayer, we tire of repeating it the second or third time. If in prayer the heart spake, we should never become weary.

"Then cometh He to His disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest."

We may henceforth sleep and take our rest in peace; be easy, that is, with regard to our cause, since He has been sorrowful, has watched, has prayed for us, and prepares Himself to fight and to gain the victory for us.

"Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me."

But we must not, meanwhile, remain negligent, and allow our souls to slumber. Let us arise and follow Him, and learn from His example.

"And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed Him

gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast."

It was a small thing to Judas to sell his Master. He must deliver Him up himself into the hands of His enemies, and betray Him with the token of peace, in order that all the malice of the betrayal should be accomplished.

"And forthwith he came to JESUS, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him."

And it was one of the twelve who gave this treacherous salutation, and the kiss of death! Tremble, O my soul, nor let the graces thou hast hitherto received deceive thee.

"And JESUS said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

The last word of CHRIST to the traitor was a word of friendship; so that it only remained for Judas to receive pardon even thus late. Hope, my soul; in whatever hour the sinner shall return from his evil ways, "their iniquities will I remember no more," saith the LORD.

"Then came they and laid hands on JESUS, and took Him. And behold, one of them which were with JESUS stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear."

And this one was Peter, who sinned by in-

discreet and ill-regulated zeal; zeal which, like straw on fire, was soon quenched, and was succeeded by the coldness of fear.

"Then said JESUS unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

Terrible sentence against the bloodthirsty and the violent, and against those who meditate vengeance! The law of redeemed humanity is charity, forgiveness, patience, and gentleness.

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My FATHER, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Could CHRIST more clearly reveal His Divinity to His disciples? If the LORD of the angelic hosts gives Himself up into the hands of a few sinners, it is not through want of power, but from voluntary submission to the decree of the FATHER, fixed from eternity, and revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

"In that same hour said JESUS to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me. But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

He uses the same language to the multitude as to the disciples, but, because they were un-

believing, He makes use of human arguments. To what end such an array of force against One unarmed, Who wishes neither to resist nor to fly, on Whom they could daily have laid hands in the temple? He obeys not their violence, but His own will.

"Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled."

The resignation of CHRIST was a cause of offence to the disciples. Truly the eyes, not only of their body, but of their soul, were yet heavy!

"And they that had laid hold on JESUS led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

The Prey was too alluring; the whole band of robbers were assembled together to exult over It.

"But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in and sat with the servants to see the end."

In the midst of all his errors, the ardent spirit of Peter ever shines forth. He alone unsheathes the sword and strikes; he follows the Master from afar; he penetrates into the court of the palace; he mixes with the attendants—a ray of the supernatural grace that descends into his heart; and this ardent love will win for him pre-eminence in the Universal

Church :[1] ("Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? Feed My sheep.")

"Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against JESUS, to put Him to death, but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none."

Oh, what a hasty form of justice was this! It is written; Be wise, ye that are judges in the earth.

"At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of GOD and to build it in three days."

False testimony! For CHRIST had never so said: but rather, Destroy this temple, (meaning the temple of His body,) and in three days I will raise it up. And it was a most true prophecy, which the impious ones changed into a fierce calumny.

"And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee?"

Caiaphas asked an answer not as a justification against the accusation, but as an occasion for a fresh calumny.

"But JESUS held His peace."

Because He knew all defence to be vain, even hurtful.

[1] In the original the words are, "Gli varrà il principato della Chiesa Universale."

"And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living GOD, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the CHRIST, the SON of GOD."

He interrogates Him in this manner, not to enlighten his own faith, but to lay for Him a deadly snare, and yet he invokes the holy name of the living GOD! Of what are not the envy and the injustice of men capable?

"JESUS saith unto him, Thou hast said."

I have not said it to thee, for thou art not worthy to hear it from My mouth; but thou hast said it of thyself.

"Nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Notwithstanding that you now see Me before you in the character of a criminal, yet the day will not tarry that you will see the Son of Man return from heaven in His power to judge you. Let us take it as said to ourselves, as the scribes and elders knew not how to profit by it.

"Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now ye have heard His blasphemy; what think ye?"

What a tender conscience had this man!

He was nourishing in his bosom the intention of killing the Just unjustly, and meanwhile he could not hear this intended blasphemy, without acting the fanatic, and rending his clothes after the manner of the multitude; an action forbidden to the high priest, as it is written of him, *Vestimenta sua non disrumpet.* (Lev. xxi. 10.)

"They answered and said, He is guilty of death."

And what other answer could they give, since they were met together for the sole purpose of coming to this conclusion? But He will come and without delay, who will judge all judgments.

"Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, Thou CHRIST, who is he that smote Thee?"

That glorious face, which the angels desire to behold, is dishonoured, and smitten with so much contumely! Nor does the Evangelist conceal it or extenuate it, considering it to the great glory of the Ruler of the universe that He should for us have endured such affronts. Let us continually read this, says S. Chrysostom, let us write it in our hearts, let us glory in it.

"Now Peter sat without in the palace; and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with JESUS of Galilee."

Peter should either have entered resolutely where JESUS was, and have trusted in His help, or through diffidence of himself have absented himself altogether. This sitting without to see, these half measures expose us to many small occasions of falling, such as was the idle talking of a servant maid, and prove destructive to our souls.

"But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest."

Notwithstanding that he had been warned shortly before by the Master, he had not held himself prepared for the assault. He is confused by the sudden question, he hesitates to deny JESUS openly, he attempts to evade doing so in general terms, but he has already fallen. Let us learn that we are weaker even than he.

"And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with JESUS of Nazareth."

It was too late then to go out into the porch. He had already given place for temptation, and he must needs fight.

"And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man."

The danger increases, the fear for self increases, and the sin increases. To denial he now adds perjury.

"And after a while came unto him they that stood by and said unto Peter, Surely thou also art one of them: for thy speech bewrayeth thee."

The matter bears an evil aspect. All this troop of servants surround him, accuse him, gather proof from his Galilean accent. What will Peter do?

"Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man."

He had set himself in the slippery way, and he falls headlong. He mingles oaths and imprecations to separate his cause from that of his Master. Miserable that I am, for I have not the love of Peter, and I find myself each day in the same occasions of falling!

"And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of JESUS, which said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice."

Oh infinite mercy of our GOD! He uses the most simple, and apparently the most natural means to reclaim us from the abyss of perdition to the way of salvation.

"And he went out and wept bitterly."

Let us also go out, let us separate ourselves at last from the enemies of JESUS, and let us wash our sins in the bitter tears of penitence.

"When the morning was come, all the chief

priests and elders of the people took counsel against JESUS to put Him to death."

The right of execution had been taken from the Jews by the Romans, and therefore they took counsel among themselves to find some other means whereby they might succeed in their design to condemn Him to death.

"And when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor."

Because the Roman governor alone could legally put Him to death. It was thirst for Blood, not respect for Law.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

It appears as if Judas were returning into the right way. He repents himself, restores the treason-money, overcomes all self-interest, confesseth himself to be a sinner, and CHRIST innocent. Will it be a true conversion, like that of Peter?

"And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that."

Thus end the caresses and the protection of the wicked! When they have accomplished their aim, when the sin is committed, they

protest that they are strangers to all responsibility. Let him who has done the evil weep over it.

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

What was then wanting in the repentance of Judas? Faith in the infinite mercy of GOD. The betrayal was a great sin, but his unbelief and desperation were greater. I also have sinned; but Thou, O merciful LORD, wilt be a propitiation for my sins, for the reason that they are many and grievous.

"And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood."

What depravation of conscience! They take it as a sin to retain the price of blood, and they have not a moment's hesitation to shed this innocent blood. The honour of how many Christians is cast in the same mould!

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, the field of blood, unto this day."

It came to pass by divine dispensation that with the price of the blood of CHRIST was provided the grave, the resting place of pilgrims; to point out to us Christians, exiles and

pilgrims on this earth, buffeted within and without by continual storms, that no other rest is prepared for us but in the passion and in the death of the SAVIOUR.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD appointed me."

All the minutest particulars of the passion of the Redeemer had been decreed by the LORD and foretold by the prophets. The agreement of the prophecies with the facts which are in process of accomplishment, (an agreement which the evangelists frequently recall in the simplicity of their narrative,) is the most splendid demonstration of the truth.

"And JESUS stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

In the Sanhedrim of the scribes and chief priests the accusation was that He called Himself the SON of GOD. Before the tribunal of Pilate, who governed Judea in the name of Cæsar, and who cared little for their religious questions, they change their ground, and accuse Him of sedition against Cæsar, and of having called Himself King of the Jews.

"And JESUS said unto him, Thou sayest."

He will not give His assent to it, because He was not come to take for Himself the material kingdom of Judea, as was imputed to Him: nor will He deny it, because He was King not of the Jews only, but of all men also, and of the angels, and of all creatures.

"And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing."

He had already answered them the evening before in the wicked assembly before which He had been cited, and it had only availed to afford fresh matter for calumny and injustice. Now He does not answer in order not to aggravate their sin.

"Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly."

He does not answer Pilate, perhaps, says S. Jerome, lest by justifying Himself, He should be set at liberty by him, and that thus the benefits of the Cross should be deferred. And at this the governor marvelled greatly, that having it in His power He did not provide for His release.

"Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas."

It was not a law, but a custom introduced by the governor to render himself acceptable to the people. And he endeavoured to avail himself of it on this occasion in order to withdraw JESUS from the judgment of the chief priests and elders, His declared enemies, and to entrust Him to that of the people, who, he hoped, must of necessity be grateful and beholden to Him.

"Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or JESUS, which is called CHRIST?"

What humiliation for JESUS to be put on an equality with Barabbas, an egregious malefactor! Let us constrain our pride to witness this spectacle, our pride that fills us with such distorted and strange judgments as to the value of our honour, of what is due to it, and much more besides.

"For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."

In Pilate and in his wife, who acknowledge the innocence of CHRIST, the one by the judgment of his reason on the envy of His calumniators, the other by the feelings of her heart, by visions and by sufferings, is represented the

people of the Gentiles, bearing witness to the Redeemer.

"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy JESUS."

It is indeed true that the severest chastisement that GOD can send upon a people is to give it a wicked priesthood. When the shepherd becomes a wolf, who shall save the sheep?

"The governor answered and said unto them: Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?"

The governor was one of those men of middle courses, with whom our age abounds. He had known the whole plot, and instead of passing a decisive and just sentence, he has recourse to a base and iniquitous expedient, which left him in a worse difficulty than before.

"They said, Barabbas."

Fruit of the wickedness of the chief priests and elders!

"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with JESUS which is called CHRIST?"

He asks the multitude what he shall do with Him. Are then the accusers themselves to pronounce the sentence? Did Pilate think perhaps to justify himself by deserting his rightful office?

"They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified."

Amongst all this clamorous multitude, who knows how many had been benefited, healed, and fed by CHRIST? See the power of evil suggestions, of human considerations, and of the forsaking of the eternal principles of justice and truthfulness.

"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done?"

If He hath done no evil, why dost thou deliver Him, O cowardly governor, to the mercy of calumniators and murderers?

"But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified."

To the inquiry, What evil hath He done? answers the cry louder still, "To the Cross, to the Cross;" answers that is, not reason, but anger and vengeance. When passion is awakened, inflamed, unbridled, it becomes mad like a wild beast, and is quenched only in blood. The heart of man is ever the same.

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this Just Person: see ye to it."

Woe to those who, like Pilate, fear man more than GOD and their own conscience! Of as much avail to the wicked, are the outward

semblances of justice, as was to him this Pharisaical washing. Did all the water which he poured on his hands, and the protestation of his own innocence, blot out from his soul the stain of blood? By no means. Not in the smallest degree.

"Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."

This unbelieving and gainsaying people willed thus to fill up the measure of their forefathers, making themselves guilty not only of the blood of the prophets, but of that of CHRIST also. And they confirmed at the same time the word of the Redeemer, that on them should come the innocent blood that had been shed in the earth, beginning from the blood of righteous Abel.

"Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged JESUS he delivered Him to be crucified."

One single word, "flagellatum," does the Evangelist write, to indicate the small account in which Pilate held that fierce torment inflicted on the Innocent. But this single word contains an abyss of suffering. It contains the nakedness of the virginal Body of JESUS, the thousands of stripes that lacerated His delicate Limbs, the wounds opened on His Person, so that from the Sole of the Foot to

the Crown of the Head there was no whole part: it contains sufferings heaped on sufferings, and the being so marred that in Him no comeliness remaineth.

"Then the soldiers of the governor took JESUS into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe, and when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"

Oh, King of the Jews! oh, King of kings, and LORD of lords! even under this aspect of sacrilegious mockery I adore Thee, my King and my GOD, and I reverently bend the knees of my soul and of my body! I pray Thee have mercy on me when Thou shalt return on the clouds of heaven in power and great glory!

"And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head."

And the smallest disrespectful action of one of our brethren is sufficient to excite us to anger! What are our sorrows compared with those of the Redeemer?

"And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him."

What torture for that wounded Body, to

have His clothing thus frequently torn off and put on again in haste! Humble thyself, O Christian, for thy luxuriousness.

"And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross."

They thought to do shame and violence to this stranger, and they bestowed on him the greatest good and honour that through them was possible. Who does not envy the Cyrenian, to whose lot fell the happiness of helping the King of Heaven to carry His Cross?

"And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull."

This was the place where those condemned to be beheaded were executed; and CHRIST willed to be put to death there, in order there to satisfy the sentence of condemnation passed upon all humanity.

"They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall; and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink."

Here is mystery. For He must of necessity taste the bitterness of death, but not remain in it long, having to rise again on the third day.

"And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which

was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots."

Let heretics and schismatics, avowed as well as hidden, hear this; they who make it their work to divide the vesture of CHRIST, which is the Church, and yet cease not to proclaim themselves Christians. Such rending can only be perpetrated by those who have already crucified JESUS.

"And sitting down, they watched Him there; and set up over His head His accusation, written, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

By Divine ordinance was this inscription placed over His head, to denote to the Jews that not even by putting Him to death had they been able to prevent Him from being their King. For the Cross did not deprive Him of His dominion, but rather confirmed it to Him.

"Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left."

These symbolise the entire human race, which is called to the Sacrament of the Passion of the LORD, divided on the right and on the left, according to the difference between the faithful and the wicked.

"And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the

Temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the SON of GOD, come down from the Cross."

For the very reason that He is the SON of GOD, He does not come down from the Cross, since for this alone is He come from heaven into the world, to die upon the Cross for us. Blessed be Thy love, O JESUS, that made Thee endure so many outrages and blasphemies for our salvation.

"Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him."

What ignorance of the law and the prophets is there in these words! Where had it ever been foretold that the future King of Israel should come down from the Cross? It is indeed written that the LORD would reign from the tree.[1] What falsehood! They promised to believe Him if He came down from the Cross, and they did not believe Him when He rose from the grave, which was a greater miracle.

"He trusted in GOD; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him. For He said, I am the SON of GOD."

What malice! Does trusting in GOD, being

[1] Ps. xcvi. 10, Old Italic version.

the SON of GOD, signify deliverance from temporal trials; or does it not rather mean the triumph of grace in the midst of suffering and of these very trials?

"The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth."

Not even their punishment, or the near approach of death, had served to diminish the wickedness of these men. Woe to him who does not take care for his soul in time!

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."

In the same manner is there darkness in our souls, when we crucify CHRIST anew within ourselves.

"And about the ninth hour JESUS cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani? that is to say, My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

He cried with a loud voice, that all the afflicted in the whole world should hear, that even He, for their comfort, willed to endure to be forsaken of His FATHER. Not that GOD had really forsaken His SON, or any of the righteous; but because He often visits a soul with a sense of desolation, and it then imagines itself destitute of all aid, human or Divine.

"Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias."

This saying, full of so much love, is turned by them to a cause of mockery! When such darkness falls upon the mind and heart, man loses all feeling of humanity, and becomes worse than the beasts.

"And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink."

It is not the unbelievers who give CHRIST vinegar to drink, but those Christians who, invited by Him Who is the True Vine to drink and transport themselves with the most pure wine of the Divine Word, which gladdens the heart, adulterate rather that wine with their false doctrines, and corrupt it with their evil works.

"The rest said, Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him."

They insult Him with their very compassion! This entire scene round the Cross has a diabolical character, that reveals the struggle of hell against the Man-GOD.

"JESUS, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."

Praise, thanksgiving, blessing be unto Thine infinite mercy, O my JESUS, that Thou didst voluntarily yield up Thy Spirit for our salvation! For Thou Thyself hast said, "No man

taketh My life from Me; but I lay It down, that I might take It again."

"And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

In the Passion of CHRIST the veil was rent that concealed all mysteries from the beginning to the end of the world, and His disciples acquired spiritual eyes to see all that had been hidden before CHRIST.

"And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."

At the renewal at this season of the memory of the death of the Redeemer, is not the earth of thy flesh convulsed, O Christian, with unaccustomed trembling? Does not a shiver, a chill run through thy frame? Is not this heart of stone rent within thy bosom? Dost thou not feel as it were a gravestone which before oppressed thee upraised from off thy soul, and an awakening to new life from thy deathlike lethargy.

"And came out of the graves after His Resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many."

Come thou out also from the grave of thy sins, from the grave of thy coldness; follow the Risen LORD, and come into the Holy City,

having thy conversation in heaven, before the multitude of His angels and of His saints.

"Now when the centurion and they that were with him watching JESUS, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the SON of GOD."

Such wonders as the rending of the most obstinate hearts, which are worked yet in these days by meditation on the Passion of CHRIST, move even unbelievers, when they are of honest purpose, to admiration and awe, and constrain them to acknowledge and to confess the hand of GOD.

"And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed JESUS from Galilee, ministering unto Him; among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children."

Truly JESUS is the GOD of humility! In the solemn moment in which the redemption of the world was being accomplished, He willed not to receive the homage either of the elect people or of the disciples, although chosen to be the princes of the Church; but He desired only the compassion of a few ignorant foreign soldiers, and of a small number of timid women of mean condition.

"When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was JESUS' disciple. He went to Pilate, and begged the

Body of JESUS. Then Pilate commanded the Body to be delivered."

Wonderful dispensation of Providence! Joseph of Arimathea, a man well known and honoured for riches and public position, hitherto a disciple of JESUS, but secretly for fear of the Jews; now that his authority is requisite to obtain from Pilate the Body of JESUS, overcomes all repugnance, presents himself openly, and casts fear away from his soul at the very moment when, according to human judgment, there appeared to be most cause for dread, and when, indeed, all the followers of the Redeemer feared greatly.

"And when Joseph had taken the Body, he wrapped It in a clean linen cloth, and laid It in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock."

The clean linen cloth is the upright mind and the pure heart of him who receives within himself the most holy Body of CHRIST; Who had not even a fitting sepulchre, as He had not in life had where to lay His head.

"And he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."

When we have received into our soul the Body of CHRIST, let us jealously guard our treasure. Let us carefully close up the en-

trance of our heart, that none of His and our enemies may be able to come and take Him from us.

"And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre."

All departed, and only these holy women remained over against the sepulchre, kept back by greater love, and by a more lively faith in the promises of JESUS. They merited by this to see His Resurrection. Let us also remain in company with them near to the Holy Sepulchre, and let us remember that he who perseveres unto the end shall be saved.

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again."

Does not your blood curdle? Do you not feel loathing and indignation within you at seeing this generation of vipers reappear upon the scene? By their devices the vital union in CHRIST has been dissolved and against this lifeless Body they still continue to direct their fury, as well as to malign His memory.

"Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first."

Observe the pride! The Divine Master is declared a deceiver, the disciples impostors and thieves, the faithful people ignorant. In truth, without knowing it they judged themselves rightly! This their last error was worse than the first. As soon as CHRIST was dead, the centurion, and the soldiers, who were Gentiles, confessed Him; the rocks were rent; but greater grew their blindness and hardness.

"Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can."

This was an abrupt manner of dismissing them, to free himself of their presence, without concealing the horror in which he had come to hold them.

"So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

The greater the care they bestowed on sealing and watching the sepulchre, so much the surer proof were they preparing of the truth of the resurrection. Let us gather therefrom this final lesson, that there is no knowledge, there is no prudence against the LORD; and that as the sufferings and the ignominy of the cross issued in the joy of the resurrection, and in the triumph of the heavens, so the continual mutability of human events, ends at last in the supreme glorification of the holy name of GOD.

Monday and Tuesday in Holy Week.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to S. Mark.

How much did Christ suffer! And yet there is that which is behind in His afflictions which we must fill up in ourselves, bearing, as did the apostle, in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus.

"After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death."

The life of the righteous man is a continual reproach to the wicked, who to free themselves from them do not despise treacheries and crimes. Let us beware betimes of envy and jealousy, for when these have laid their nest in our heart, they cause even the chief priests and the doctors of the law to fall.

"But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people."

Fear not, O scribes, the people will not rise in tumult. When Christ healed its

sicknesses and miraculously satisfied its hunger then the multitude proclaimed Him King and Prophet. When they shall see Him fallen into your hands, they will unite themselves to you in crying out for His crucifixion.

"And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head."

Let us also break the alabaster of our hearts, that tears of contrition may flow therefrom, for they are a most precious ointment that is poured upon the head of JESUS.

"And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?"

Many among Christians still think that wasted which is given to CHRIST, whether for the splendour of His worship, or for the maintenance of His poor. These are the descendants of Judas.

"For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her."

The workers of iniquity exalt philanthropy with their words, but they betray themselves by their empty deeds of charity. They murmur against the righteous, they slander them, they

will not leave them in peace, they continually vex them.

"And JESUS said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me."

The woman did not defend herself, but she was defended by JESUS who alone avenges the poor, and justifies the calumniated.

"For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always."

Would that we had always the will to do good to the poor, as we have always the opportunity! Let us not at least drive them from us with harsh words, remembering that it is written, A good word is of more value than a gift.

"She hath done what she could, she is come aforehand to anoint My Body to the burying."

As if He had said, How dost thou dare to rebuke this woman, who, being unable to do aught else, prepares My Body for the burial with this ointment, thou, who dost meditate within thyself to consign this very body to death?

"Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

Not only as a memorial of this loving woman,

is that which she did told in the whole world, but also that which the covetous disciple murmured against her is told as a memorial of him. Reproach as well as praise frequently serves as an instrument of GOD's justice.

"And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them."

Not invited, not constrained, but spontaneously he went to make the offer of himself. Unless indeed it may be said more truly, that he was drawn by envy, by spite, by avarice. Passion unrestrained when it is in our power, obtains the mastery over the soul, and leads it inexorably to ruin.

"And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money."

This is all the recompense that the world can give, money! But peace it cannot give, that peace which passeth all understanding, and in comparison with which gold is worse than dirt.

"And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him."

He had abundant leisure to reflect, and to withdraw his foot from the rash step; but he spent his time instead in better assuring the success of his criminal designs.

"And the first day of unleavened bread, when

they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover?"

It is a precept of the law that is in question; and yet they inquire of the Master what is His will. For the merit of obedience does not consist in the actual work, but in fulfilling the will of GOD who commands it.

"And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him."

He who desires to celebrate the Passover with CHRIST, must enter into the city, that is, into the Church, and follow the teachings of her ministers who carry in frail vessels the waters of grace, the laver of the Sacrament of Baptism.

"And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."

Is not the power of dominion in the Person of CHRIST, LORD of the universe, and sovereign disposer of hearts, apparent in these words of prophecy?

"And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover."

And as such His disciples acknowledged Him. They did not ask, And if the good man of the house will not receive us; and if he inquires, Who is this Master who thus dispenses with all ceremony? Without replying, immediately they departed, went to the city, found according to His words, and made ready. Noble example of obedience, governed by trust in God, not by human prudence!

"And in the evening He cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily, I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me."

If it had been Mine enemy who had betrayed Me, I could have borne it in peace; but one of you, who eateth with Me! but thou, My friend (as he had foretold by the mouth of David) who didst take with Me sweet refreshment!

"And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?"

The fear of sinning made the good disciples sorrowful, not so Judas. Blessed he who mistrusts himself, and doubts that he himself may be the traitor! Such humility will be his strength.

"And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with Me in the dish."

This shows that the others were so troubled that they withdrew immediately their hands from the table. There remained in the dish only the hand of CHRIST because of the serenity of betrayed innocence, and the hand of Judas through the shamelessness of treachery.

"The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him."

He need not have gone; but He goes spontaneously in order to conform Himself to the will of the FATHER.

"But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

Better is it not to be born again to CHRIST through the grace of vocation, than to betray Him by apostasy. A more lenient sentence will be given to unbelieving Tyre and Sidon in the last day, than to the Holy City, Jerusalem.

"And as they did eat, JESUS took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My Body."

CHRIST, the Eternal High Priest, unites together the two sacrifices of the old and of the new law. He first eats the lamb of the Mosaic passover, and immediately after offers the lamb of our Passover, His own Body to be immolated for us.

"And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it."

They all drank of it; even Judas. But it availed him not for good. To him who approaches without having emptied his heart of all hatred, this cup turns to poison.

"And He said unto them, This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of GOD."

Oh, excellence of the New Testament, consecrated not by the blood of goats and calves, as was the old one, but by the blood of the mystical Lamb CHRIST JESUS, who refreshes us pilgrims at the fount of consolation, and will satisfy us with His pleasures as out of a river in the kingdom of GOD.

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

After having partaken of food for the body, and much more after having partaken of that of the soul, let us sing a hymn, or let us thank GOD, before we go out to our affairs, as did JESUS CHRIST and His disciples.

"And JESUS saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be

scattered. But after that I am risen I will go before you into Galilee."

After His resurrection our good Shepherd cannot again be smitten. Let not His sheep fear that they will be again scattered; but it is needful that they should not of themselves stray from their shepherd, who ever keeps His flock assembled around Him, in the pastures of eternal life.

"But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."

Simon Peter really loved JESUS more than the rest of his companions, but this love, although most ardent, was not yet strengthened by the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT.

"And JESUS saith unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice."

And thus was the triple denial to take place in the night, when the darkness forbids work, and before the crowing of the cock, herald of the light.

"But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all."

Just because they had not even understanding of these truths, did Peter persist, and they all echoed him.

"And they came to a place which was named

Gethsemane; and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray."

He prays, to prepare Himself for His Passion: they may remain in peace, and can sit and wait.

"And He taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch."

Peter, James, and John had been witnesses on the mount of the Transfiguration of the SON of GOD; they may, therefore, now venture to be present at the Agony of the Son of Man. We also know that He is the well-beloved SON of GOD, in Whom the FATHER was well pleased; let us not, therefore, be offended by His sorrowfulness, which He voluntarily endured for our consolation.

"And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, FATHER, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

GOD is our FATHER, and all things are possible unto Him. He has, then, the will and the power to save us from all tribulation. Let us allow ourselves to be led by Him in the way which He has destined for us, whether of evil repute or of good repute, whether of sick-

ness or of health, whether of misery or of comfort; for He will soon lead us to consolation and to glory.

"And He cometh and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest not thou watch one hour?"

How much affection is there in these few words, addressed to Simon in particular!—to Simon sleeping, not to Peter, the watchful shepherd of his flock; to Simon, who just now had made such vehement promises, and had not been able to remain awake for even one hour.

"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."

To shake off the sloth of the disciples, He reminds them of the weakness of human nature. This nature must be born again and renewed by grace, in order to come out victorious from temptation.

"And again He went away and prayed, and spake the same words; and when He returned He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy;) neither wist they what to answer Him."

How could they answer Him that their eyes were heavy, that the flesh was weak, when just for that reason He had warned them to watch and pray?

"And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."

Three times did He interrupt His prayer to help the weakness of the disciples; but in vain. Sleep on, then, at your ease, and rest in peace. He will not yet despair of them. Rise, behold, here cometh the traitor; the presence of danger will not fail to wake them!

"And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders."

In what worthy company came Judas, he who had had hitherto the Apostles and the Redeemer for companions!

"And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely."

He feared then that He might escape out of their hands; because, perhaps, having seen so many of His miracles, he believed Him to be invulnerable, or a sorcerer; or because he wished to insure his obtaining the covenanted reward. Insane and wretched traitor!

"And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him."

Yet more insane and more wretched, in that he thought, by the greeting of a disciple, by the kiss of a friend, to hide from the eye of CHRIST his treachery, and, as it were, to appear unconnected with the tumultuous band that followed him.

"And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him."

The angels of peace wept bitterly at such a spectacle, and restrained their indignation within their breasts in reverence to the Divine pleasure.

"And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear."

But weak humanity was unable to contain itself, because it cannot immediately conform itself to the mysterious reasons of Divine wisdom.

"And JESUS answered and said unto them, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

These few words were a whole sermon to that blind multitude. The Scriptures were familiar to them, and their fulfilment in His Person should have opened their eyes.

"And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there

followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."

All fly from JESUS in the time of temptation, even the nearest and most beloved, as was this young man, who was, according to some, James, the younger brother of the LORD; according to others, John the disciple, whom He loved. But let us remember that all returned to Him later, and courageously laid down their lives for Him.

"And they led JESUS away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes."

Not through zeal for their ministry were they assembled, but through the desire for vengeance.

"And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest; and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire."

He followed Him, but from afar; he entered, but he remained with the servants. He was divided between love and fear. This hesitation cannot last, for no one can serve two masters.

"And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against JESUS to put Him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together."

Truth is one; falsehood is always fickle and contradictory. Passion often makes us love darkness rather than light.

"And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together."

There was in this accusation a vestige of truth, but disfigured and distorted into a contrary sense, as is usual with all fabrications of errors and calumnies. CHRIST had said, "Destroy," not "I will destroy;" nor had He spoken of a temple made with hands, or made without hands. Two little words changed are sufficient to change to blasphemy the words of GOD.

"And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked JESUS, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?"

The high priest perceives the difficult position, and attempts to escape from it, by turning himself directly to JESUS.

"But He held His peace, and answered nothing."

What dignity, what wisdom, what reproach in this silence!

"Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou the CHRIST, the SON of the Blessed?"

It was to this that he wished to lead Him from the first. Impatience at last betrays him.

"And JESUS said, I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The real question being put, and being lawfully interrogated, He can only answer the truth, although He knows that it will not benefit them, and will considerably injure Himself. Here is an opportunity of glorifying GOD, purely for love of GOD.

"Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?"

He could hardly believe it true that he was freed from the false witnesses, who were on the point of damaging the whole cause. He set himself, impostor that he was, to cry blasphemy, to show himself grieved by the offence against GOD, to ask the counsel of others in so grave a case. Let us pray the LORD never to permit that passion should thus dim the clearness of our intellect.

"And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death."

What a contrast between the fury of the high priest, and the frozen impassibility of these others! But whom did they wish to deceive with this comedy?

"And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy; and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands."

At length they throw off the mask, and abandon themselves to their inhuman rage, to the basest vengeance. Nor was their covering His face without its mysterious significance, indicating that they voluntarily hid themselves from the light of truth.

"And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, And thou also wast with JESUS of Nazareth."

The being with JESUS of Nazareth was an accusation in the presence of the wicked; it would have been a commendation in the presence of the righteous. Behold the great danger of evil associates.

"But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest."

He denied, before a servant maid, Him, Whom later on he was to confess in the presence of the princes of the earth, and in the midst of torments. But the HOLY SPIRIT had then made of him a new man.

"And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew."

He took no heed the first time of the cock crowing, as we too frequently heed not the divine warnings which are sent to us in the order of nature.

"And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again."

He denied JESUS in denying that he was among the number of His followers. He who is ashamed of the practice of religion, he who is ashamed to fulfil his duties, is ashamed of JESUS Himself; and of him JESUS will in His turn be ashamed in the presence of His FATHER.

"And a little after they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto."

It is no longer this or that woman, but many men who turn together against him. It is thus that by little and little rare occasions become more frequent, slight faults become grave sins, solitary falls habitual death of the soul.

"But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew."

In the crowing of the cock is symbolized the call to repentance which GOD makes to us by means of so many voices internal and

external. He called Peter after the first falsehood, He calls him now immediately after the perjury, as He had promised. He is truly long-suffering, and very merciful and true.

"And Peter called to mind the word that JESUS said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon he wept."

S. Peter did not delay his repentance; but he began straightway to weep when he remembered the word of JESUS. When we are fallen let us rise up again quickly, that our sins may not multiply, and that our soul may not linger in iniquity.

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound JESUS, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate."

Oh, justice of GOD that renders to every one according to his works! They delivered Him to Pilate, that is, into the power of the Romans, and ere long GOD delivered them, and the Holy city and all the people, to the sword, to destruction, to dispersion at the hand of these same Romans.

"And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

Many years had not passed, and Pilate found himself once more before JESUS in eternity, and

then he knew Him to be not only King of the Jews, but King of kings and LORD and Judge of the quick and the dead.

"And He answering, said unto him, Thou sayest it."

When the multitude wished to proclaim Him king, He withdrew Himself from them, for an example of humility. To-day when to deny that He was a king might save His life, He cares not to do it, for an example of self-abnegation.

"And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing."

In so innocent a life where did they find so many heads of accusation? There where all calumniators find them; in their own malice.

"And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against Thee."

Pilate well understood that the very multitude of the accusations proved their falsity, and that it would be easy for CHRIST to justify Himself. Therefore he incited Him to answer.

"But JESUS yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled."

And well might Pilate be astonished. For the mind of the poor heathen filled only with

thoughts of his own profit, was not capable of conceiving the idea of so noble a sacrifice.

"Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired."

To conciliate the love of the rabble, he exercised mercy every year. And yet to save the Innocent One, and with Him, his own conscience, he now had neither justice nor mercy.

"And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection."

What a noble character was this man! A rebel and a murderer! Let us remember his good qualities, for soon they are to win for him the preference over the SON of GOD in the estimation of the people.

"And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them."

Behold on the one hand the souls of the multitude spontaneously inclined to mercy.

"But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto the King of the Jews?"

Behold on the other hand the soul of the judge ready to seize the opportunity of exercising mercy.

"For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy."

Moreover this mercy was mere justice, considering the innocence of the Accused. It seems then that nothing stands in the way of the safety of CHRIST.

"But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them."

The blind self-interest of these chief priests stands in the way of it, for they had said among themselves, What shall we do? seeing that this Man works many miracles, and all men follow after Him. And instead of following Him also, and of opening their eyes to the light of this Sun, they took counsel, in their ignorance, how they might extinguish the sun in the heavens.

"And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews?"

The fate of CHRIST depends then on the caprice of the rabble! But it was a divine dispensation, in order that that multitude so soon to suffer reprobation should have no excuse.

"And they cried out again, Crucify Him."

Sin is the renewal of the crucifixion. How often do not our passions drive us madly to cry, Crucify Him? Are we not then more guilty than the Jews?

"Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done?"

Of me also, when I crucify Him afresh through my sins, CHRIST asks within my heart, What evil have I done to thee? what good could I do for thee, and have I not done it?

"And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him."

Permit not, O LORD, I pray Thee, that I should persist in wishing to imitate the Jews. Take out from my bosom the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh.

"And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered JESUS, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified."

Accursed desire to please the world! Truly it is written in Holy Scripture, "GOD hath scattered the bones of them that please men."[1] And the better to please them, Pilate did not content himself with delivering Him to be crucified, but he added of his own free will the punishment of scourging. And yet but now he was asking, What evil hath He done?

"And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Prætorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews!"

The whole of this scene of ignominy was enacted by the Roman soldiers. Oh, Rome,

[1] Vulgate, Ps. lii. 6.

Rome, the King of the Jews despised by thee, will render to thee retribution, but it shall be one worthy of Himself, in mercy and pity. He will set in the midst of thee the chief seat of His new kingdom, whose limits shall be the ends of the earth.

"And they smote Him on the head with a reed; and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him."

This brutal mockery lasted but a short time, but its punishment has lasted now many centuries, and will last eternally. Let him who has power to do evil in this age remember this.

"And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him."

They leave Him only because they are weary. And tired of inflicting scourges, thorns, and mockeries, they turn to prepare the crucifixion. CHRIST alone never wearies of suffering in silence, and of passing willingly from torment to torment.

"And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross."

He was passing that way by chance, he did not think to carry the cross with CHRIST, he was compelled to do so by violence. How incomprehensible are the ways of the wisdom of

God! Many souls find themselves following Christ bearing the cross on their shoulders, who, like Simon, had formed wholly different plans for themselves, and who were occupied with their children or their households.

"And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull."

This place of horror and of cursing is become the most holy spot in all the earth; let him who cannot go there in the body, fly there in spirit each day, when the unbloody Sacrifice of the cross is offered, to adore, to weep, to pray, to sanctify himself.

"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh, but He received it not."

If we wish to soothe the sorrows of Christ with the wine of our good works, we must beware, that they may be acceptable to Him, of mixing therewith any bitterness, whether of unworthiness of purpose, or of unfaithfulness in the execution.

"And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take."

In order to crucify Him, they reopened the Wounds of Jesus' most sacred Body, by violently tearing from them His garments, which had adhered to them; they drove the thorns yet further into His divine Head in drawing off

His seamless coat; they threw Him with a blow upon His hard bed of suffering; they hammered nails into either Hand and into His Feet, and the cross being raised, the whole weight of His Body hung upon those nails, thus tearing the wounds, which were wrenched with the efforts made to place the stem of the cross in the hole prepared for it. . . . . The human mind cannot dwell on the contemplation of so much agony!

"And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him."

It was the third hour when the Jews cried to Pilate, Crucify Him. It is then, says the Evangelist, that they crucified Him, for the soldiers did not actually crucify Him till the sixth hour. Sin is already accomplished, when the will to commit it is fixed.

"And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

This superscription was the condemnation of the Jews. They crucified their King, their Redeemer, who even from the cross stretched out His arms to the unbelieving and gainsaying people.

"And with Him they crucify two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors."

They hoped thus to hide their iniquity and His innocence, making Him appear a common thief worthy to be crucified with His equals. Let us take warning; and let us not confound the evil with the good, reckoning CHRIST, as do the crucifiers of modern times, to be as other men, children of sin, and equal with Zoroaster and Mahomet.

"And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross."

Many imitate even now these passers by, who, entangled in their earthly affairs cannot see beyond flesh and blood. And if they throw in passing a look upon the cross, it is to curse it and insult it. According to them, he who wishes to be safe, he who wishes to live happily should come down from the cross.

"Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes."

All the wicked understand each other. Protect me, O LORD, from the company of the malicious.

"He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

Yet a little while, and He who saved others will save Himself, without the assistance of others. "Mine own hand hath saved Me."

"Let CHRIST the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

They have seen so many miracles, and they have not believed; they see now the miracle of such superhuman patience, and they believe not. They will believe only when they shall see Him Whom they nailed to the cross, return with thunderings and tempests.

"And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him."

They were companions of CHRIST in suffering but not in resignation. If in our afflictions we do not unite ourselves in heart to Him, we shall be miserable in body and in spirit, in this life and in the next.

"And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour."

The sun refused its light to the dreadful spectacle, because every creature being ordained to the glory of GOD, naturally shrinks from concurring in an offence towards Him, and arms itself rather to vengeance.

"And at the ninth hour JESUS cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani? which is, being interpreted, My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

As before entering upon His passion He had prayed the FATHER, If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, so now that His suf-

ferings are drawing to a close, He complains of being forsaken of GOD. And by the one and the other of these sayings He willed to signify to us the reality of His sufferings, and the infirmity of the human nature which He had assumed; which made Him feel the internal and external pains, as any other man would have felt them, nay more exquisitely than any other, from the greater perfection of His soul and of His body.

"And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elias."

These carnal men fancied, that in His impotence to save Himself, as He was urged to do by the chief priests, He was calling Elias to help Him.

"And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down."

And they play cruelly upon this invocation, and for greater wickedness and malice they moisten with vinegar, they embitter those Lips from which had issued no word of reproach, but prayer only.

"And JESUS cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."

Thy cry echoes through my heart, O my JESUS, for within it are comprised all the

sufferings of humanity. I adore Thee fervently even as a lifeless corpse, for in those wounded Limbs Thine inseparable Godhead yet lives.

"And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

Immediately that CHRIST died the veil of the temple was rent from one end to the other, and all nations entered with CHRIST into the Holy of Holies and saw and believed.

"And when the centurion which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this Man was the SON of GOD."

This happy centurion was the first to see and believe, and to confess the Man-GOD. And the chief priests, and the scribes, and the rest of the people, who were also present as well as the centurion, and who had the advantage of knowing the law and the prophecies, what did they? They remained more blind and more unbelieving than before.

"There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome."

Who gave strength to weak women to endure the fearful sight of the martyrdom, and of the death of the Crucified? Love, and nothing but excessive Love.

"(Who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem."

Which love had acquired so steady a character by the long practice of following and serving CHRIST, and coming up with Him to the Holy City, that is to say, to the sanctification of their own souls. Let us imitate these holy women, and so we shall no longer have reason to deplore our instability and weakness of spirit.

"And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of GOD, came."

He was noble and a captain over ten, and nevertheless he had placed his hopes not in fleeting things, but in the expectation of the Kingdom of GOD. It is not he who honours CHRIST with words only, who is a true disciple, but he who by his deeds prepares the kingdom in himself and in others.

"And went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the Body of JESUS."

Holy boldness which strengthens us to encounter dangers and opposition, and renders easy the fulfilment of the most arduous duties.

"And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him

whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the Body to Joseph."

It seemed to him that He had died too quickly. Remorse begins to do its work in his soul, and remorse, when crime is accomplished, makes the accomplishment of it appear too rapid.

"And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre."

Let us join company with Joseph in this pious duty. Let us acquire the fine linen, by the purification of the heart and body in the waters of repentance; let us fold within ourselves with love the Body of CHRIST, after having taken It down from the Cross, forsaking all sin, which is a renewal of His Passion. Let us bury ourselves with Him in the sepulchre, which He Himself will help us to hew out of the rock, which is firm, sure, and impenetrable to the wicked; and let us wait until in His power He shall roll away the stone which covers Him, to rise with Him to new life.

Wednesday and Thursday in Holy Week.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to S. Luke.

The Passion of Christ has changed the aspect of the spiritual world—Christ is the chief of martyrs; and not only were they martyrs who laid down their lives for Him, but all Christians should be martyrs, giving up for His sake both heart and soul. In martyrdom is to be found our joy and our crown.

"Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him; for they feared the people."

They feared the people, but they did not fear God and His justice. What can men do unto us, if we keep before our eyes the holy fear of God, and the observing of His Commandments?

In this consists the whole man.

"Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests

and captains, how he might betray Him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude."

And Judas also has a care for the presence of the multitude, and none for the presence of GOD! But it was Satan, who having entered into his soul, gave him counsel. When passion urges us to separate ourselves from CHRIST, to range ourselves with His enemies, to promise to put wickedness into action, to seek opportunity for the betrayal, let us then remember that such counsels proceed from Satan.

"Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat."

It was necessary for the Jews to kill the passover, and it is necessary for Christians that they should eat it: without the strengthening of this heavenly food how could we endure the weary pilgrimage of life, and not faint by the way?

"And they said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare?"

CHRIST is the Master who chooses the room where the mystical supper is prepared, and where the marriage of the Lamb is accomplished. You did not choose Me, said He to

the Apostles, but I chose you. Oh, happy the soul which He chooses for His abode!

"And He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples?"

The sign of the election of a soul is the pitcher of water carried in by the good man of the house, that is, purity of heart studiously guarded and renewed.

"And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready."

Man on his part must not resist the impulses of the grace of CHRIST, he must not ignore the time of his visitation; but offer voluntarily, to the supernatural workings of CHRIST, a large and well-disposed heart, where He may enter with His disciples, that is, with His teachings of eternal life, of which He has appointed His ministers the depositaries.

"And they went and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover.

"And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him."

Notwithstanding the good arrangements of the master of the house, some time was yet needed that the apostles might prepare, and

the Redeemer waited that the hour should come. Likewise it is necessary to our Easter that there should be a real preparation, and the Church assigns to us in the holy season of Lent, the time for repentance, in order that it may prepare and purify us.

"And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of GOD."

Oh what immensity of love! Almost as if man were the GOD of GOD! CHRIST desires with great desire to eat the Passover with us, He finds His delight in being with the sons of men, and our soul nauseates this food, which appears to us too small a thing. Alas! truly he who doth not love abideth in death.

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of GOD shall come."

Let us also give thanks to GOD, who has sent His kingdom upon earth, has established His Church, and has received us into her bosom, and let us pray to Him that the temporal kingdom of His grace, may be to all the redeemed a preparation for the eternal kingdom of His glory.

"And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My

body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me."

How often do we approach to receive the most holy Body of CHRIST, and to adore Him present under the form of Bread and Wine without having this remembrance sufficiently vivid in our minds! If the memory of the Passion of CHRIST were grafted in our hearts, as He desires, we should understand our obligations as Christians, in a very different sense from what we do at present.

"Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you."

GOD eateth not the flesh of bulls, nor the blood of sheep. The only Sacrifice that truly honours Him is the Sacrifice of the New Testament, in the precious Blood of the spotless Lamb, CHRIST.

"But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed."

Oh wonderful and awful Providence, that rules the destinies of men, not by chance, but according as it is determined in heaven! The innocent One will endure treachery and death; but woe to the betrayer! It is necessary that the good in this world should be tried by afflictions; but woe to those through whose deed the affliction shall have come. Have

mercy, O LORD, upon the persecuted, and also upon the persecutors.

"And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest."

The hidden pride of the disciples in thinking themselves incapable of the betrayal, made itself manifest in the strife for precedence. Was it indeed the time for such vainglorious disputes, when CHRIST had but now announced that His Passion was approaching, and that the traitor was present among them as they sat at meat?

"And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve."

Sublime doctrine, and heard now for the first time in the world! Power, greatness, nobility, are judged by GOD in a light different to that in which they are by men. Seeing the value in which Christians in these days hold money, the satisfying of the senses, the pride of life, would it not appear as if they had returned to Paganism, considering that the doctrine of CHRIST was not announced to the rich and to the great in the earth?

"For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."

The Redeemer confirms His teaching of humility, with the example of Himself, for being LORD of the universe, He had taken the form of a servant.

"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as My FATHER hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

And with the promise of the heavenly reward to His imitators. To serve and to suffer in this life will win a throne in the next, and a perpetual feasting in our transformation with CHRIST.

"And the LORD said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

Remember that no one is tempted of Satan except by divine permission.

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

The Divine Mediator did not pray that Simon should not be tempted, but rather that in the midst of temptation his faith should not fail. The wind of temptation is necessary to

the soul to separate the good wheat from the chaff, in order that by its breath our weaknesses and imperfections may be winnowed like husks, and the full and chosen grain of our virtues may remain, to be gathered into the garners of our Heavenly FATHER, and to confirm our strength and that of others.

"And he said unto Him, LORD, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death."

Good and fervent desire; but incomplete! Prayer that obtains the invisible aid was wanting; without it all human strength is but weakness.

"And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me."

Peter shall fail, not before the hangman and executioners, for whom he thought himself prepared; but before the question of a maid servant, and that three times. And this was so that he might retain no further doubt of his own weakness.

"And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing."

As, says S. Chrysostom, he who teaches another to swim, at first placing his own hands under the body of his pupil, upholds him with great attention; but later, withdrawing them

compels him to provide alone for his own safety, even though he may yet sink somewhat and drink the bitter waters, so did CHRIST act with His disciples.

"Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end."

Until this hour they had not suffered for lack of anything, they had not required any provision. But now that, according to prophecy, persecution and death are imminent, let him who has a purse for his money, take also the scrip to carry his food, for men will make you to endure hunger, thirst, and nakedness. And he who has not a sword, let him sell his garment and buy one, for you will encounter afflictions, and torments and death.

"And they said, LORD, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough."

He said not, It is enough, in the sense that two swords would be sufficient against so great a multitude, but in order that the disciples, having understood His words only in the material sense, should not think that they were to provide themselves with more arms in His defence. It is enough; nothing more is needed.

Ye will understand hereafter what I wish to say to you.

"And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the Mount of Olives."

He was wont to go to the Mount of Olives to pray. He who has not the habit of prayer, will with difficulty know how to pray in the hour of temptation.

"And His disciples also followed Him."

The disciples in following Him show also an intention of praying.

"And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

They receive, moreover, the command to do so, and the necessity of it is pointed out to them.

"And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed."

Alone and bowed to the earth He prayed for all, Who alone was to suffer for all, and to be humiliated to death, even to the death of the Cross.

"Saying, FATHER, If Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me."

Here is the temptation! the shrinking from suffering.

"Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done."

Here is the victory! the entire conformity of the human will to the divine.

"And there appeared an Angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him."

Here is the fruit of prayer! in the comfort of angels, the strengthening of the spirit.

"And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly."

The more the sorrow and distress increase, the more His prayer becomes lengthened.

"And His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Blessed agony, that enables us to bear with resignation the thought of death! Blessed bloody sweat, which softens to us all our sorrows!

"And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow."

Sorrow produced an evil effect upon the disciples. Instead of resisting it, as CHRIST had done, by prayer, they gave themselves up to it in sleep.

"And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

For the second time He warns His disciples of the necessity of prayer to enable them to overcome temptation. What wonder if later

they all fled, since instead of praying they had all been sleeping?

"And while He yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto JESUS to kiss Him."

Judas comes resolutely before all the others, to show them the way, and to point out the person of JESUS. He does not vacillate, he does not hesitate; but advances straight up to Him, and kisses Him. From a disciple he changes himself not only into a traitor, but into the captain of traitors. The corruption of the righteous is the worst of all corruptions!

"But JESUS said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

And how did not the heart of Judas break at these words of so much gentleness, of so much love? Down, down, O wretched man, at the feet of thy betrayed LORD! Weep bitterly, for there is yet time. He loves thee still, and will receive thee into His arms.—But Judas is gone to receive the price of blood.

"When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, LORD, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear."

Whilst the others are questioning the LORD, Peter always ardent and impetuous actually

strikes. Nor was this without its mystery. Peter strikes because Peter had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and he who absolves also condemns. The servant's right ear is cut off, because from him who is the servant of sin is taken away the inward hearing, the spiritual understanding of the law.

"And JESUS answered and said, Suffer ye thus far."

This was not an answer to Peter, as approving what he had done up to that point; but to the disciples who had questioned Him, desiring them to let the things they were witnessing go on to the end.

"And He touched his ear, and healed him."

JESUS only can restore the hearing of the soul to him who has lost it. Men can speak to the ear of the body; but if the Word does not speak within the heart, all their discourses are vain.

"Then JESUS said unto the chief priests and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to Him."

In saying it to the servants sent by them, he intended to say it to themselves, who by acting through others thought to be accounted innocent of His death.

"Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the

temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness."

Let those well understand this, who, seeing the prosperity of the wicked and the oppression of the righteous, are tempted to deny the providence and the justice of GOD. This present life is less than an hour in respect of eternity; sin has power only in darkness. When the day of the LORD shall appear, that day which knoweth no end, then shall we behold clearly the now inscrutable designs of the Divine wisdom.

"Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house."

The words of JESUS were then of no more avail to these sons of violence than they had been to Judas. May they avail us who read, that they may not return unto Him altogether void.

"And Peter followed afar off."

Afar off, but yet he followed Him. Woe to him who altogether loses sight of his LORD.

"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him."

The fire of his love having cooled, Peter is

cold, and draws near to the flames kindled by sinners; for when our heart does not relish the delights of heaven, it requires the consolations of earth. But at the very moment when we think to enjoy these in peace, the servant-maid of temptation supervenes, and we are undone.

"And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not."

He did not deny Him before His assailants in the garden, for CHRIST was by his side; he denied Him to this weak woman, because he had withdrawn himself from CHRIST.

"And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them."

Do we not often find ourselves in certain company, where it is imputed to us as a fault that we are good Christians?

"And Peter said, Man, I am not."

And how often, taken by false shame, do not we also deny openly that we are such!

"And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him; for he is a Galilean."

Peter had a whole hour of time, and instead of flying from temptation, he continued in the midst of those who had taken JESUS, and even took a familiar part in their conversation. Had

it not been so they could not have recognised his accent to be Galilean.

"And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest."

This third fall ceases to produce wonder. He had gone so far, that he could no longer draw back.

"And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the LORD turned and looked upon Peter."

He was yet speaking; the sin was not yet entirely consummated, and already grace proffered the remedy. It was the LORD Who turned Himself first to Peter, Who looked upon him tenderly, Who prevented him in His mercy.

"And Peter remembered the word of the LORD, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Blessed Peter, who remembered in good time the Word of the LORD! And blessed he who hears this Word, and keeps it in his heart! For if it does not work immediately, it is still always a seed that will spring up in due season, and will bear fruits of repentance and of tears.

"And the men that held JESUS mocked Him, and smote Him."

Mockeries and blows! Oh, what comfort in JESUS for all generations of the afflicted!

"And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote Thee?"

Did they, then, really believe, in their ignorance, that having veiled His face, they had withdrawn themselves from His sight? As if there were any covering impenetrable to the Eye of GOD, Who is brighter than the sun, and Who sees in the most hidden parts of the hearts of men.

"And many other things blasphemously spake they against Him."

What infinite subjects for meditation do not these unrecounted torments of a whole night furnish to us!

"And as soon as it was day the elders of the people, and the chief priests and the scribes, came together, and led Him into their council, saying, Art Thou the CHRIST? Tell us."

Until it was day they had leisurely taken their repose, and congratulated themselves on the good fortune of having the Redeemer at last in their power; and He during that same night had sleeplessly borne the insults and the torments inflicted by the dregs of the people. Oh, how deceptive are the appearances of this world!

"And He said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I also ask you, ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go."

This answer is sufficiently conclusive to unmask the hypocrisy of all those, who feign to seek sincerely after truth, and in reality only look for pretexts to colour the wickedness of their own designs.

"Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of GOD."

For this evil generation is reserved the judgment of the Son of Man, Whom they despised, and the proof of the power of GOD, which they ignored.

"Then said they all, Art Thou, then, the SON of GOD?"

They return to the same fraudulent question. Is this the fruit of the warning just given?

"And He said unto them, Ye say that I am."

As if He had said, Ye ought to know it, for ye have the prophecies, ye see the works and the miracles, and ye hear the word of Truth.

"And they said, What need we any further witness?"

Nor did they need any witness from the first. They had resolved to arrive at this con-

demnation, either with witnesses or without them.

"For we ourselves have heard of His own mouth."

They heard to their own condemnation, that which was spoken to salvation. The word of GOD is a two-edged sword.

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate."

They were then a great multitude, and among so many there was not one upright and GOD-fearing soul! The contact of the wicked is pestilential.

"And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is CHRIST a King."

Impudent calumny! Had not CHRIST Himself, when questioned as to the tribute to be paid to Cæsar, answered publicly, Render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's? Had He not fled from the multitude who wished to proclaim Him King?

"And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

Pilate, mocking as it were both the accusers and the accused, says to Him, Thou then art called King of the Jews; Thou so poor, so

weak, so destitute of help; without friends, without followers?

"And He answered him and said, Thou sayest it."

As if He had answered, Thou thyself seest it with thine own eyes.

"Then said Pilate to the chief priests, and to the people, I find no fault in this Man."

Pilate well knew what kind of persons were likely to raise up seditions against Cæsar, and therefore he treats these men as madmen.

"And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place."

In the absence of proofs, they raise their voices yet more, and they translate into other words their vague and general assertions, which do not thereby become arguments. In general the greatest clamour is made by him who is in the wrong; he who is in the right is calm and dignified.

"When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time."

Pilate rejoiced to be able in some way to avoid the responsibility of such a trial, and did not allow the opportunity offered him by Herod's presence in Jerusalem, of withdrawing

himself from so much importunity and unreasonableness, to escape him.

"And when Herod saw JESUS, he was exceeding glad, for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him."

The gladness of Herod was caused by the opportunity thus offered him, not of hearing the truth and of profiting by it, but of satisfying the burning curiosity that was urging him on to know the Man of whom so much was spoken, and of seeing some miracle worked by Him in the same manner as one might desire to witness the feats of a conjuror.

"Then he questioned with Him in many words, but He answered him nothing."

But he had been mistaken in his reckonings, and in place of mocking found himself a subject of mockery. JESUS speaks to those of a childlike spirit, and does not waste His words on the wise and prudent of this world.

"And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him."

This iniquitous generation never wearies, and even when it has attained its end, it will still persist in its hatred. Oh! that the children of light were as wise as the children of darkness. Oh! that the righteous were as con-

stant in their good resolutions as the wicked are obstinate in their iniquity!

"And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate."

Let it not then excite in us astonishment that the world should reckon the mortified and hidden life of the followers of CHRIST insanity, and their end without honour. Long ago it passed this judgment on CHRIST Himself.

"And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."

Oftentimes it happens that the wicked are reconciled at the expense of the less fortunate innocent. The selfishness of the passions ever breeds dissension and discord; reconciliation is produced only by the common contempt of virtue and truth.

"And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them."

The full convocation of all ranks of the people has reference to the definitive sentence about to be uttered.

"Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him."

It would be impossible to declare more clearly and justly the innocence of CHRIST.

"No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him."

And this is confirmed by the judgment of Herod; therefore by both tribunals CHRIST is absolved.

"I will therefore chastise Him and release Him."

Wherefore now this chastisement, which means nothing less than a sentence of scourging? He is acknowledged innocent, and yet is punished. Alas! Pilate, Pilate, this thy first guilty yielding, this first compromise between thy conscience and human interest, will drag thee on to the precipice.

"(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)"

His own concession had become an obligation laid upon him. Pilate did not certainly err from overfirmness.

"And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas, (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)"

Barabbas was truly guilty of the crime of sedition, which they falsely imputed to JESUS, with the additional one of murder. And they clamour for the death of JESUS, and for the

release of Barabbas, that it may be manifest that they do not seek the punishment of the crime, but the satisfaction of revenge.

"Pilate, therefore, willing to release JESUS, spake again to them."

He had the good desire, but he lacked the strength to give it effect.

"But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Far otherwise determined and constant was the obstinacy of the Jews to see Him crucified.

"And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go."

Thus the weak-spirited waver between fear and duty, and imagine expedients which, far from conciliating these two feelings, offend them both.

"And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed."

They raise their voices yet louder, and redouble their howling, as if outward clamour could stifle the inward accusation of reason, and could, through the ears, thrust violently into another's soul their own malice. Let us beware of allowing ourselves to be overcome

by the clamouring of the wicked, which is ever the loudest in this world.

"And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required."

Of these two opposite wills, that of Pilate and that of the people, the most energetic and persevering must of necessity prevail. Not the infirm will, but strong resolution attains the end, and produces action.

"And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered JESUS to their will."

The comparison between the murderer and the Innocent One is made apparent here by the Evangelist, in order that from the narrative may be clearly drawn the idea of the injustice of the judge and of the iniquity of the accusers.

"And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear it after JESUS."

Simon was the representative of us all; we all must bear the Cross after JESUS. It is the penalty and at the same time the redemption of sinful humanity; and on him who does not take it up voluntarily, it is laid by force, as it was on Simon.

"And there followed Him a great company of

people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him."

In this day also the multitude that follows CHRIST is great—that is, all Christian people. But are those who insult Him, as did the people, or those who weep over Him, as did the women, the most numerous?

"But JESUS turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

The innocent One who suffers does not need weeping and pity, but rather the wicked who inflict on Him the suffering. The true evil in the world is sin, the true sufferer is the sinner. He who suffers persecution for righteousness' sake is blessed.

"For, behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck."

In the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and in the last condemnation of the universal judgment, they will lament their fruitfulness, which only served to multiply the victims of the Divine justice.

"Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."

As if He said, referring to the insults which He was constrained to bear, and for which the

women compassionated Him, The shame is not here; it will be hereafter, when all the inmost recesses of the conscience will be opened out, at the tribunal of GOD, and in the presence of the whole world.

"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

If only the outward form of a sinner suffices to draw down upon the head of CHRIST all the weight of the vengeance of GOD, what will become of the workers of iniquity—dry trees, already ready for the burning?

"And there were also two other, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death."

CHRIST was then publicly reputed a malefactor, like unto the other two, with whom He was led to be crucified. And He speaks not, and He bears patiently so much shame to redeem my untruthfulness, my pride!

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."

They wished, in their malice, by the equality of the penalty, in a manner to equalise in the eyes of the world the offences of all three, and to throw upon the Cross of CHRIST the frightful shadow of the crimes of the two thieves. But the direct contrary came to pass, and the

presence of the thieves only served to the more splendid glorification of CHRIST.

"Then said JESUS, FATHER, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

They nail Him to the Cross, and calumniate Him; JESUS prays for them, and excuses them to His Heavenly FATHER. Such is the revenge that JESUS came to teach unto men. He who desires another revenge is a Gentile, is an unbeliever, is not a Christian.

"And they parted His raiment, and cast lots."

They divide among themselves and cast lots for His garments, because the clothing of the Redeemer, His merits, His graces, are not shed abroad in our hearts according to human calculation, but through an unexpected heavenly distribution, falling suddenly, as it were by chance.

"And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be CHRIST, the chosen of GOD."

For the very reason that CHRIST was the chosen of GOD, the true SAVIOUR of the world, He was to save others and not Himself; for He had purchased our salvation with the price of His own Blood, of His own death; and this price must needs be paid to the uttermost farthing.

"And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself."

The soldiers, being Gentiles, were ignorant of the scriptures and the prophecies, and did not know the CHRIST. They mock Him therefore as an impotent king, and are less guilty than the Jews.

"And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

They intended by this to publish His ignominy, in place of which they published His glory. By that inscription, the universal kingdom of CHRIST was at the very moment of the crucifixion promulgated to all languages and to all nations.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be CHRIST, save Thyself and us."

In this man was working a regard for his own interest; he railed to be delivered from his torments, and he was the most hardened of all. In the midst of agony and death resignation, not cursing, brings comfort.

"But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear GOD, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss."

Oh! how sincere in this other is the humble confession of his iniquity! How courageous is the accusation not of his companion only but of all the by-standers, who did not fear GOD! How noble the public recognition of the innocence of JESUS.

"And he said unto JESUS, LORD, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

O wonderful faith of the penitent thief! He sees JESUS condemned, and he addresses Him as King; he sees Him on the Cross, and he prays to Him as if He were seated in heaven; he sees Him humiliated, and he adores Him as if he beheld Him on the throne of His glory.

"And JESUS said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Nor is JESUS behindhand in generosity. To those who insult Him He answers not, but to him who trusts in Him He answers without delay, and bestows on him that very day the reward of his faith: a reward greater than he had prayed for; since He does not promise to remember him, as he had asked of Him, but to take him to reign with Him in Paradise.

"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour."

The light was created first by GOD through

the Word, and in the death of the Body assumed by the Word that light threatened to become extinguished. All nature bears witness through this fact to the divinity of CHRIST.

"And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst."

It is useless that the sanctuary should any longer remain veiled, since the majesty of GOD which has hitherto dwelt within it has left it for ever.

"And when JESUS had cried with a loud voice, He said, FATHER, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit."

He cries with a loud voice that all His brethren in the universal world may hear to the end of all ages. From that moment He commends to the common FATHER with His Spirit, the spirit of each one of us, who are members of His Body, and are one with Him.

"And having said thus, He gave up the ghost."

May I also, O my JESUS, expire with these words upon my lips! May I trust at that supreme moment in Thy death, may I undergo with resignation the necessary sacrifice of my life, as a worthy penalty of my sins, and may I present it to the common FATHER purged and sanctified by the union of the voluntary

oblation that Thou madest unto Him of Thy Life.

"Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified GOD, saying, Certainly, this was a righteous Man."

We also have been spectators of what has taken place on Calvary, and we have by meditation followed all its details. Let us also glorify GOD, acknowledging the justice, the innocence, the love, the patience, the generosity, the infinite mercy of His SON.

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

Let us also, in returning from the mount, smite our breasts, through tenderness and compunction; for within this breast is nestled that which crucified JESUS—my sinful will.

"And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things."

If we have the happiness to be among the number of His acquaintance—if, forsaking the world and its affections, we have followed Him, as did the holy women,—let us remain with them to guard His Body, and to watch the sepulchre.

"And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a

counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just. (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them.) He was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who also waited himself for the kingdom of GOD."

This was the only just man of all that wicked council. And wherefore was he just? Because he waited for the kingdom of GOD. If we live entirely engrossed with the cares of this life, without hope, without looking for the kingdom of heaven, we cannot be either truly good or truly just.

"This man went unto Pilate, and begged the Body of JESUS."

The disciples of CHRIST, so far from obtaining the Body, could not even have gained access to the presence of Pilate. Besides the poor followers of the Nazarene, Divine Providence had reserved for its own ends, and until the opportune moment, this noble decurion.

"And he took It down, and wrapped It in linen, and laid It in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid."

In order that doubt might not arise on the third day that another body there buried had risen, and not that of JESUS. I, too, shall shortly be laid in the grave, and shall sleep in dust; but in my bosom shall rest with me the

firm faith that I shall one day be re-awakened by the angelic trumpet, and shall in this my flesh behold GOD my SAVIOUR, and fix these very eyes on His Face. I pray Thee, O my LORD, that I may then find in Thee a loving FATHER, and not a severe Judge.

Good Friday.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to S. John.

Christ did not suffer alone. With Him suffered also His most holy Mother.[1] She taught us, by her example, to impress silently, in the secret depths of our heart, the image of her crucified Son.

"At that time Jesus went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples."

In the garden of happiness, in Eden, began the history of our fall; in the garden of suffering, in Gethsemane, begins the history of our redemption. The new Adam, Who willingly offered Himself for our regeneration, enters willingly into that garden. Let us accompany Him with His disciples, and let us not withdraw ourselves from His side, until He shall have accomplished the work of ransom by His death.

"And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew

[1] In the original, "Regina dei Martiri."

the place; for JESUS ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples."

For what purpose had JESUS so often resorted thither with Judas and the others, except for that of teaching them prayer, and the truths of eternal life? But the voice of avarice was more powerful in Judas. When any particular passion threatens to obtain dominion in our soul, let us curb it before it renders us ungrateful and traitors.

"Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. JESUS, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?"

Needless provision of arms against an unarmed and most peaceful Man; of torches against Him, Who, in order that He might be found, had gone to the place so well known to the traitor, and Who at once presented Himself and interrogated those who had come. But the Jews willed it thus, to throw upon CHRIST in the eyes of the people the opprobrium of a noted malefactor and of an impostor; CHRIST willed it thus to demonstrate to His disciples and to us all that, without His permission and will, no human strength or device could have enabled them to lay hands on Him, or even to know Him.

"They answered Him, JESUS of Nazareth."

And truly by the light of their lanterns and torches they see Him, they hear Him, they speak to Him, and they do not recognise Him.

"JESUS saith unto them, I am He."

This word "I AM" GOD alone can pronounce, as He pronounced it on Horeb to Moses, to the terror of the Egyptians. JESUS pronounces it to-day in Gethsemane, because beneath His Flesh is hidden the Godhead.

"And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them."

So long as Judas was faithful he saw his Master; when he stands before Him to betray Him he knows Him no longer. Permit not, O JESUS, that I should ever betray Thee, or fail to perceive Thy Divinity under the veil of Thy Humanity.

"As soon, then, as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground."

Sublime display of omnipotence, that renders yet more sublime that other now imminent display of patience and love in the Passion. Arms and armed men lie confusedly on the ground, overthrown by a single word from CHRIST. Oh, what shall it be in the day of judgment, when that word shall be repeated

by CHRIST, the terrible Judge, in His infinite power!

"Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye?"

Since by the power of His voice they have known Him to be GOD Who overthrows His enemies, He interrogates them a second time to reveal Himself as Man resigning Himself into the hands of His persecutors.

"And they said, JESUS of Nazareth."

They had then risen from the earth as ignorant as before, nay, yet more inexcusable. Woe to us when we reach that lowest depth of iniquity, contempt of divine punishment!

"JESUS answered, I have told you that I am He."

Here is no longer the power of the Judge, it is the confession of the Victim. But let us never forget that JESUS Who now speaks as a victim is the same Who spake just now as a judge.

"If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way."

And He continues to speak with the authority of a Master to His servants, who obey blindly and allow the disciples to depart, according to His command.

"That the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

I pray Thee, O my JESUS, permit not that I should be the son of perdition among Thy disciples of the present day! Command by Thine omnipotence mine enemies, that they let me go my way and let me not become their prey.

"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear."

[1]Wherefore did Peter strike? because he had received the power to bind and to loose. And it is the ministers of the Church who henceforth are to cut off with the spiritual sword of excommunication the inward ear of him who mishears the teaching of the Church.

"The servant's name was Malchus."

This name signifies, "future King," for Malchus in the restoration of his ear through CHRIST, acquired a new hearing whereby he shall one day hear from the mouth of CHRIST: "Come, ye blessed of My FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

[1] In the original: "Perchè Pietro, e non un altro degli Apostoli? Perchè Pietro aveva ricevuto la singolare potestà di legare e di sciogliere, e quindi egli è che dee con la spada spirituale dell' anatema amputare l'orecchio interiore di chi malamente ascolta gl' insegnamenti della Chiesa."

"Then said JESUS unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My FATHER hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

Shall I refuse, after this example, to drink the cup, however bitter, which has been assigned to me not by GOD, avenger of His wrath, but by GOD a FATHER in the tenderness of His love, for my salvation, for my good only?

"Then the band and the captain and the officers of the Jews took JESUS, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first."

JESUS is imprisoned to deliver us from the bonds of the devil, is bound to break the chains of our sins, is dragged to judgment to spare us the sight of the anger of GOD as a Judge.

"For he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year."

Annas had no power to pronounce judgment, but JESUS was led before him in the hope that being father-in-law to Caiaphas, or that being more advanced in years and in wickedness, he might be better able to forward this impious trial.

"Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."

Verily it was expedient that this Man should die for all the people of sinners, not however through the will and vile machinations of

Caiaphas and his fellows, but through His own will and infinite mercy, because this Man was GOD.

"And Simon Peter followed JESUS, and so did another disciple."

Let us, who proclaim so loudly even the appearance of a good deed, learn humility from S. John, who does not name himself, when speaking of the praiseworthy action of having followed JESUS, of having remained faithful to Him.

"That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with JESUS into the palace of the high priest."

Further trait of humility! That it may not appear that constancy and love for his Master made him enter with Him, he hides the true reason under colour of being known in the palace of the high priest.

"But Peter stood at the door without."

He who was to deny CHRIST is deservedly left without, far from CHRIST.

"Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter."

This work also of brotherly love is hidden by the modesty of the nameless disciple.

"Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto

Peter, Art not thou also one of this Man's disciples?"

This shows that S. John had made no mystery of his being a disciple of CHRIST; had it been otherwise the door-keeper would not have asked Peter if he *also* were one of the number.

"He saith, I am not."

What readiness to deny, corresponding with the facility to boast. The fall is ever in proportion to the height to which we pretend to attain.

"And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves."

It well became the servants and officers, carnal men without the warmth of love, to have a care for their own comforts, and to warm themselves at their ease.

"And Peter stood with them and warmed himself."

But it did not become Peter to imitate them and to provide for his bodily comfort at the very moment when CHRIST for love of him was being judged by the wicked.

"The high priest then asked JESUS of His disciples, and of His doctrine."

Treacherous inquiries! Let us ever receive with a humble, sincere, and docile heart the instructions of the Church and of her minis-

ters, so that we may not be taken in the net of our own subtilty.

"JESUS answered him, I spake openly to the world."

Too truly has His Word resounded through all the world. Woe to him who closes his ear, so that he hears It not.

"I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing."

We should ever frequent with the multitude the public services and congregations of the Church, where the bread of gospel doctrine is broken for all, and shun the singularity of abstruse and hidden theories which are always dangerous.

"Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."

Many there were standing round Caiaphas who had watched each word of CHRIST in which they might find an excuse for calumny, who had several times interrogated Him deceitfully, tempting Him. Confident of His innocence He refers to their judgment.

"And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck JESUS with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so?"

At so great an outrage the heavens shook, and the angels trembled for fear. But wherefore did not the earth open to swallow up the vile and iniquitous servant who dared to smite the most Holy Face of the LORD of the universe? Because this benign LORD willed rather to give us the example of patience which overcomes the world.

"JESUS answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?"

What gentleness, what reasonableness in this answer! Through the merits of Thy patient endurance of such an outrage, grant me, O JESUS, the grace to preserve in all the contradictions of this life, especially in those that most keenly affect my feelings of honour, calmness, serenity of mind, and quietness of heart.

"Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest."

The bonds that confine the innocent Limbs of the Redeemer are not loosed even now, by reason of our continuance in bondage to sin. Let us straightway burst these bonds, and thus shall we set CHRIST free.

"And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself."

Alienation from his Master still continued

in Peter, his coldness continued through absence of faith and love.

"They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of His disciples?"

And with reason do they address this question to Peter, for not only was he one of the disciples, but he was the first of them all.[1]

"He denied it, and said, I am not."

GOD permitted the fall of the chief[2] of the Apostles, that remembering his own frailty he might tenderly assist the frailty of his brethren.

"One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?"

The fact is too manifest; it is of no use to deny it. But a first falsehood, a first sin brings a hundred others in its train.

"Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew."

Who can tell how many times he would have denied, had not the cock recalled to him the prediction of the Master? Let us tremble at this example, seeing how great is the power of the snares of the devil over a soul grown lukewarm in the service of GOD.

[1] Original: "Il capo e principe di tutti."
[2] Original: "Capo della Chiesa."

"Then led they JESUS from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment."

He willed to be dragged before these successive tribunals, that we might learn from Him patience and humility under the injuries which we receive from others.

"And it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."

I too, should be a miserable hypocrite, a Pharisee, if, while fulfilling to the letter (as in duty bound) the minutest outward details of my religious duties, I shut up my bowels of compassion, if I strive not to save my brother from falling, if I shed as it were his innocent blood by my evil example.

"Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this Man?"

Answer, O my soul; when thou compassest the death of CHRIST by thy sins, wherewith hast thou to reproach Him, what accusation canst thou bring against Him?

"They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee."

Meaningless words! The accusation cannot be set forth without revealing the malice of the accusers.

"Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law."

Pilate wishes to free himself from this responsibility, and that the Jews should do according to their will. This is not zeal for justice, it is love of self; pure egotism. How many Pilates are there among Christians, who, so that they wash their own hands of it, so that they save their own individual responsibility, care not for the offence offered to GOD, for the injury done to the Church, for the loss of souls!

"The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

Oh, unreasoning wickedness that betrays itself! They did not then ask that He should be judged, but that He should be put to death. Passion treads under foot all justice, demands to be satisfied at all costs.

"That the saying of JESUS might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die."

He had said that He should be delivered to the Gentiles, and be condemned to death.

"Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called JESUS, and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

This title of King of the Jews is the phantom that disturbs the clearness and uprightness of

Pilate's judgment, and which will end by hurrying him into injustice. How many sins are excused by the pretence of reasons of state!

"JESUS answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"

He willed by this to show to Pilate that nothing was hidden from Him, and thus to manifest Himself to him not so much as King, but as GOD the searcher of hearts.

"Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?"

He is confused, and is indignant with the Jews and the chief priests for having placed him in such a position. He therefore asks CHRIST Himself what He had really done to draw upon Himself the anger of these men.

"JESUS answered, My kingdom is not of this world."

The kingdom of CHRIST is in the world, extends throughout the world, but is not of the world. All we who belong to CHRIST have been taken out of the world, delivered from the power of darkness, and transferred to His kingdom which is of heaven.

"If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews."

How miserably weak are the kingdoms that

are of this world! They have neither life nor strength in themselves, but what they owe to arms and to their servants.

"But now is My kingdom not from hence."

How noble on the contrary, how firm is the kingdom of CHRIST, which is here, but does not derive its strength from hence! It is a pilgrim here, but it came from Heaven and will return to Heaven, and is maintained by strength from Heaven hidden within it, and needs no earthly support; nay, resists the world and overcomes it.

"Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a King then?"

Pilate, who was not of this kingdom, could not apprehend its mysteries, and therefore returns to his fixed idea of CHRIST'S earthly kingdom.

"JESUS answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Thou sayest it, and so I am. Since being King in Heaven from all eternity, for this did I condescend to become incarnate, and to come into the world, to preach unto you the truth, and to establish you in My Kingdom.

"Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

O my true King, call me also to partake of Thy kingdom, of the kingdom of truth, that I may hear Thy voice to justification and salvation.

"Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews."

The inquiry immediately followed by his going out indicates a profound scepticism. Let not us to whom the truth is known, to whom CHRIST has revealed Himself, ever withdraw ourselves from Him, and let us humbly await His answer to our inquiries.

"And saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all. But ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

Because he did not believe in the truth did he fall into these errors of confounding justice and mercy, of relinquishing his own authority to gratify the rabble, of judging against his own conscience. Wisdom in action is the result of a truthful mind. Increase my faith, O LORD, that I may ever act uprightly.

"Then cried they all again, saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."

A robber rather than CHRIST! But let us not regard the cruelty of the Jews, let us rather contemplate the wisdom and mercy of

God. The approach to the condemnation of Christ is the door of deliverance to all sinners who are represented by Barabbas. The innocent One is destined to death for the very reason that He may be an expiation for the robber and save him.

"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him."

It was I, not Pilate, who scourged Thee, O my Jesus, and not once only, but how many times have I through evil indulgence of my body rendered the renewal of Thy scourging necessary to heal my wounds with Thy merits.

"And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews!"

It was I, not the soldiers, who crowned Thee with thorns through my evil thoughts! O what a multitude of painful wounds! But enough, for now there remains no place in Thy most sacred head where fresh piercings may be inflicted. At least I will not add derision to my wickedness, mocking the very mercy through which Thou dost bear with me.

"And they smote Him with their hands."

Are not my shameless sins whereby I have publicly offended Thee so many buffetings? And yet have I thought to glorify myself

thereby, never dreaming to be ashamed of even the most heinous sins, thus covering Thy most Holy Face with confusion.

"Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him."

The sight of JESUS reduced to such an extremity of suffering and of ignominy inspired the soul of Pilate with so much pity, that he felt convinced that it would produce the like effect upon the people, and that innocence would triumph at last.

"Then came JESUS forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe, and Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!"

Behold the Man; behold GOD who hath made Himself man; behold the Man—GOD brought to so pitiful a condition by the sins of mankind. I adore Thee, true GOD and true man. King of the Jews and of all nations; I adore Thee with the diadem of glory and with the crown of thorns, surrounded by the brightness of the saints, and by the insults of the rabble, arrayed in the robe of salvation, and in the tattered purple of Thy Passion, worshipped by the angels and despised by sinners. Behold the Man; the Wonderful, the Unequalled, the Man of the new creation, created after GOD, and Who shall renew after GOD all the generations of men.

"When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him."

The chief priests and the officers, not the people, who had not yet lost all feeling of humanity.

"Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him."

The first time he declared JESUS to be innocent, and then scourged Him; now he again twice proclaims Him innocent and yet will he crucify Him. Even so the sinner confesses GOD to be worthy of reverence and worship, and yet he offends Him, recognises the evil, and yet returns to commit it. I pray Thee, O JESUS, let my heart agree with my reason, and my reason with faith.

"The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the SON of GOD."

And they answered rightly; for the whole Mosaic law foretold this death, which, voluntary on the part of CHRIST was necessary for us. Yea, He was to die, not indeed because He had made Himself the SON of GOD, but rather because being the SON of GOD, He had made Himself the Son of Man for the salvation of those who were under the law.

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was

the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto JESUS, Whence art Thou?"

Pilate respected CHRIST, nor did he deem Him capable of saying what was not true. Hearing that He had said that He was the SON of GOD, he was afraid, and took Him aside to ask Him if He truly came from GOD. Whence art Thou, from heaven or of the earth? Art Thou only King, or art Thou also GOD?

"But JESUS gave him no answer."

I bless Thee, O JESUS, that having hid these truths from the powerful, the proud, the curious in the earth, Thou hast revealed them to the childlike in spirit, to Thy humble disciples.

"Then saith Pilate unto Him, Speakest Thou not unto me?"

The fear and the respect have already vanished; pride is re-awakened.

"Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?"

Exaltation in office often turns the brain: Pilate boasts of having so great power, and he was not able to save Him Whom he had judged to be innocent!

"JESUS answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin."

To Pilate's vain boasting CHRIST opposes the power of the Heavenly FATHER, which is His own, and shows him to be but a miserable instrument of the will of Him, of Whose life he believes himself to be the sole arbiter. This does not, however, absolve him from guilt, though he is less guilty than the chief priests and the people.

"And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him."

He felt the truth of this saying, and therefore endeavoured to arrest the sin of killing the Innocent One.

"But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."

At length they discover the chord in Pilate's soul which will give out the sound they so much desire. The accusation of CHRIST'S being a malefactor did not persuade him, respect for the Jewish law did not influence him, he was troubled but for a moment on hearing that He was the SON of GOD; but the loss of the friendship of Cæsar, which signified the loss of that power of which he was so proud, this fear vanquished him.

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought JESUS forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

"And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour."

He prepares to pronounce the sentence with such great solemnity, that the Evangelist makes mention of every particular: the authority of the Roman Cæsar in whose name justice is administered; the presence of all the people and of JESUS; the sitting down in the judgment seat; the dignity of the place which is named both in Greek and in Hebrew, because both for the Gentiles and for the Jews will this sentence bear great significance; the day as being the Friday before the passover, when from every city the people were assembled in Jerusalem; the hour of noon as being the most convenient for the people to assemble at the judgment hall. Let us hear meanwhile this sentence!

"And he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King."

Oh, marvellous Wisdom of the Divine counsels! Pilate unknown to himself is the instrument of the Providence of GOD, and in place of condemning CHRIST, proclaims Him legally and solemnly to be King of the Jews, which in truth meant the Messiah and the SAVIOUR of the world.

"But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him."

And they too, without knowing it, confirm the sentence of Pilate; for this their King was indeed to be crucified by them.

"Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King?"

He could not throw off the impression that CHRIST was the King of the Jews, as if Truth itself had fixed this conviction immoveably within him.

"The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar."

How could they exchange the kingdom of Cæsar for that of CHRIST? It sufficed indeed to contemplate the insignia of the regal state of the Redeemer: the crown of thorns, the tattered purple, the reed for a sceptre, the bonds on His hands!

"Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified."

Here Pilate is no longer the minister of the Divine Will, but of his own weakness. But he does not pronounce a fresh sentence; the first one ever remains, "Ecce Rex vester." He here only permits the crucifixion by the Jews.

"And they took JESUS, and led Him away."

And the Jews did not wait to receive the permission a second time. After so much

battling with Pilate, they were overjoyed to be able to lead Him away forthwith.

"And He, bearing His Cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and JESUS in the midst."

Let us hasten to follow JESUS in the company of His most holy Mother, pierced with grief. Behold the Calvary, behold the Cross, behold the two thieves, behold the Son of Man lifted up from the earth, with justice and mercy on either side, Mediator between heaven and earth.

"And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the Cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where JESUS was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin."

Title of innocence for the Crucified, of condemnation for the crucifiers, of salvation for us! *Jesus*, He is our SAVIOUR. *Nazarenus*, the name of His own country on earth, shows Him to be true Man. *Rex*, He is King at the very moment that He is upon the Cross; He is therefore King, not of the earth, but of heaven; He rules not over the body, but over the spirit. He is then true GOD. *Judæorum*, He came first for His own people; but as His own

received Him not, He adopts as children all those who receive Him, of whatever nation, Hebrew, Greek, or Latin.

"Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am King of the Jews."

Oh, foolish chief priests, what is this that ye say? Shall that peradventure be no longer true, only because it does not please you, which was spoken by the Truth Itself: I am the King of the Jews?

"Pilate answered, What I have written I have written."

Oh, ineffable power of the Divine workings in the hearts even of the ignorant! What Pilate has written he has written, because what the LORD hath said He hath said; and no man shall be able to change it to all eternity.

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified JESUS, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat."

The division of CHRIST'S garments into four parts, and their distribution among the soldiers who were Gentiles, represents the kingdom of GOD gone forth from Judea, the Church propagated to the four winds, to the four corners of the earth.

"Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among

themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be."

Nor let us rend this mystical coat, which is the unity of the Church in the bond of love. It is woven into the hierarchy of Bishops.[1] He who breaks this thread remains cut off from the Church.

[In the words of S. Cyprian: after His Resurrection our LORD saith unto Peter, "Feed My sheep;" and though we may observe Him giving the same power to all His Apostles, when He saith, "As My FATHER hath sent Me, so send I you," yet, to manifest His regard for unity, He took His rise from one, and settled the whole on that foundation. The Apostles were in truth what Peter was, entitled with him to an equal share of dignity and power; but the process, I say, began in one, that the Church might be considered as one: which Church the HOLY GHOST, personating CHRIST, hath described, "My Dove, My undefiled is one: she is the only one of her mother: she is the chosen one of her who bare her."]

"That the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and

[1] "Ella è tutta quanta contesta della gerarchia dei pastori, incominciando da sopra: dal Romano Pontefice. Chi spezza questo filo rimane tagliato fuori."

for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."

Behold how four ignorant soldiers fulfilled that which from all eternity had been determined by the counsels of Divine wisdom, and revealed through the prophets! Whether soldiers or prophets, all are equally subservient to the designs of GOD.

"Now there stood by the Cross of JESUS His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene."

Whence came so much strength to enable the Mother to participate in all the Passion of her Son, and to stand now by His Cross to receive His last words? From the very excess of her love. I also will remain at the foot of the Cross, and share this sorrow. May I have love sufficient to enable me to carry out this good resolution.[1]

"When JESUS therefore saw His Mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son!"

Even so, O LORD JESUS. The sentence of Cana is now reversed. Then it was, "What have I to do with thee?" "While I teach and weary Myself in seeking for lost souls, never

[1] In the original, "Voglio anch' io rimanermi con voi, O Maria, presso la croce, ed esservi compagno nel pianto. Datemi amore, perchè io possa compiere il buon proponimento."

shall I pillow My head on thy maternal breast, never seek thy consolation when all men rise up against Me." Now Thine hour is come, and Thou hast to do with her who bore Thee.[1]

"Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother.[2] And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."[3]

LORD JESU, make our homes as holy as that of Salome.

"After this, JESUS, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."

Would that I, O my JESUS, had rendered Thee some service, had fulfilled in myself Thy will, and then could say to Thee, I must, I desire to do still more! Nevertheless, I now declare to Thee, without further delay, *Sitio;*

[1] In the original, "Eccovi in me un altro figliuolo, O Maria; il quale non viene a voi per propria presunzione, ma per volontà dichiarata del suo primogenito fratello e primogenito figliuolo vostro. Egli ha amati tutti i suoi discepoli, li ha addottati nella sua eredità, li ha fatti figli vostri."

[2] In the original, "O Madre, mostrate di essere Madre mia. Tante pruove me ne avete dato fin ora; ma deh non si stanchi la vostra tenerezza materna verso di me! Custoditemi, reggetemi, salvatemi e in tutto il cammino della vita e nell' ora della morte mia."

[3] In the original, "Da questo punto intendo di ricevervi in tutti i miei affetti, in tutte le mie cure, nella mia figliale reverenza e devozione."

I thirst to begin to love Thee, to begin to suffer for love of Thee!

"Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth."

Yes, it is full time that I put the sponge of vinegar to my lips yet moist with carnal delights! From this moment I accept all the sorrows of life by whatever hand they shall be inflicted; I accept the bitterness of death in whatever form it may await me! I offer all to the justice of GOD for my sins, together with the vinegar and gall which were offered to Thee on the Cross!

"When JESUS therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished."

When everything concerning myself shall likewise be accomplished, when the course of this earthly life shall be run, O receive me then to the arms of Thy infinite mercy!

"And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."

Grant that I in that hour may also bow my head in token of full abnegation of my own will, of perfect resignation to Thine, of single-minded offering of my life! Grant that I may commit with confidence my spirit into Thy hands.

"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the Body should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."

Truly great was that sabbath day, it was the day which the LORD hath made, the greatest day of all ages. Then was slain the alone Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, then was celebrated the true Paschal Feast. O mighty change which turned all mankind from death unto life; from earth, nay from hell itself to Heaven.

"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to JESUS, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side."

They spared Thee not then, O my LORD, the torture of breaking Thy legs, but to inflict on Thy dead Body the outrage of this cruel wound? But it was not the cruelty of the soldier, it was Thy love which guided the lance to open me a refuge in Thy Breast. I hasten to hide myself through the open side within Thy Heart, fathomless refuge whence no power shall snatch me.

"And forthwith came there out blood and water."

Life-giving drink, laver of regeneration for my soul! Most Holy Blood, transport me,

most pure stream, cleanse me. Good JESUS, grant me Thy eternal salvation.

"And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him Whom they pierced."

The second Adam having thus voluntarily fallen asleep in the arms of death, from His open side issued the Church, was born the common Mother of all believers. With great reason, then, does the Evangelist confirm the truth of the fact, which was the symbol of so great a mystery, with the solemn authority of the Old and New Testaments, with the testimony of his own eyes and with that of the ancient prophecies.

"And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of JESUS, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the Body of JESUS: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the Body of JESUS. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to JESUS by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight."

JESUS being dead, figures cease, and the truth succeeds. Those disciples who formerly were secretly so for fear of the Jews awaited the shades of night to come to Him, Joseph and Nicodemus among the chiefs of the San-

hedrim, now manifest themselves and come to Him openly, come out of the synagogue, enter into the newly formed Church, and in her name receive the Body of JESUS. We thank Thee, O Divine SAVIOUR, that Thou hast left Thy most holy Body in the keeping of the Church until the consummation of ages to be the comfort, salvation, and food of our souls.

"Then took they the Body of JESUS, and wound It in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

According to tradition,[1] the Virgin Mary, seated at the foot of the Cross, received into her bosom one by one the nails which were drawn from the most holy Wounds of her Son and received His lifeless Body in her arms. The beloved John, weeping, again drops his head upon the breast of his Master; once again hastens the Magdalene to embrace and kiss His merciful Feet and wash them with her tears. Of these three, be it ours to rather imitate the penitent. Embrace we the Feet of the Redeemer, and may our eyes become two

[1] I cannot find any authority for this statement. In Mrs. Jameson's Legends of the Madonna, p. 308, we find: "In the old legend it is said that when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus wrenched out the nails which fastened the hands of our LORD to the Cross, S. John took them away secretly, that His Mother might not see them," (affin que la Vierge Marie ne les veit pas, crainte que le cœur ne lui amolist.)

fountains of tears; worthy spices with which to embalm His lifeless Limbs.

"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they JESUS therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

How near is my heart to Thee, O JESUS, now is the passover at hand! I will deposit Thee in it. But, alas! this heart of mine is without but a whited sepulchre, and within full of corruption, and cumbered with the sordid remains of my passions. O Thou Who didst promise to renew all things, begin the renewal of my heart, even the creation of a new heart within me, and come to dwell in it, Thou alone, in time and through eternity. Amen.

DEO GRATIAS.

PRAYERS OF THE PASSION,

FROM OTHER SOURCES.

O Lord Jesu Christ, True Samaritan and Lover of our souls, give us grace to deliberate in meditation on Thy Passion, in which is all our hope for mercy, grace, and salvation. Amen.

Jesus bears His Cross.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O Christ, Who, amid many reproaches and injuries, with excessive pain didst bear Thy Cross on Thy sacred and lacerated shoulders, and, wearied and exhausted, didst toil excessively under its weight. Grant me grace to embrace the cross of self-denial with ardent devotion, and to imitate with most fervent love the pattern of Thy virtues, and humbly to follow Thee even unto death. Amen.

Crucified between Two Thieves.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O Christ, Who, hanging on the Cross between

two thieves, "wast numbered with the transgressors," that by Thy incomprehensible humility and patience Thou mightest correct, and at the same time expiate, our impatience and pride. Raise my soul upwards, I beseech Thee, that, looking down from on high on all transitory things, I may admire Thee alone, my GOD, Who wast crucified for me; may love Thee alone; may sigh after Thee, think of Thee; may dream of Thee, may relish Thee, may delight myself in Thee, and may altogether refuse to receive any consolation save in Thee. Amen.

Jesus hanging on the Cross.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O CHRIST, Who didst hang three hours on the ignominious tree of the Cross, with Thy hands and feet pierced through, and with a copious shedding of Thy precious Blood, didst of Thine own free will endure an unspeakable agony in Thy holy limbs. Lift up, I pray Thee, on to Thy Cross my miserable soul lying in the dust, and purge it from the dregs of corrupt affections, and vehemently inflame it with a desire after Thee, and with love for its heavenly country. Oh, saving Blood! oh, life-giving Blood! Oh that Thou, my LORD, oh that Thou wouldest wash me in this precious Blood, and thoroughly heal and purify me! Oh that Thou wouldest offer it unto Thy FA-

THER for the perfect satisfaction of my iniquities! Grant, I pray Thee, that my inner man may with ardent affection receive and drink up the life-giving drops of that same blessed Blood, and truly taste how sweet is Thy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus prays for His Murderers.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O CHRIST, Who wert so good even to the worst of sinners, that Thou didst beseech the FATHER even for those who crucified Thee, saying, "FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Grant to me, I beseech Thee, the grace of true meekness and forbearance, that, according to both Thy precept and example, I may love my enemies, may do good to those who hate me, may pour out before Thee humble petitions for those who injure and persecute me, and may commiserate them and forgive them from my heart. Amen.

The Penitent Thief.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O CHRIST, Who didst bear with one thief reproaching Thee, while to the other, when he humbly acknowledged his unrighteousness, and with pious faith confessed Thee to be GOD and King, Thou didst graciously promise the glory of Paradise. Regard me, I beseech Thee, with those eyes of compassion which

Thou didst turn upon the penitent thief. Oh that by the help of Thy grace I may live so innocent a life, so faithfully serve Thee, so purely love Thee, that at the end of this life I may be worthy to hear from Thee, my most gracious Redeemer, that much-desired word, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Amen.

For Thou art the King of Peace and the SAVIOUR of our souls, and to Thee we offer up our praise; to the FATHER, and to the SON, and to the HOLY GHOST, now and for ever, even unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our FATHER, &c.

Jesus commends His Mother to S. John.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O CHRIST, Who, looking down from the Cross on Thy sweetest Mother, full of grief and tears, didst so affectionately pity her grief, and didst commend her to Thy disciple John, and again didst commend John to her. May I reverence her as the blessed among women, and love and honour Thee with the most pure and ardent love. Grant that, in every necessity, and especially at the hour of my death, I may find Thee present to help me. Amen.

Jesus thirsts.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O CHRIST, Who, when Thy Body was exhausted with the loss of Blood, didst faint on the Cross,

wast tormented with a burning thirst, and inflamed with an unspeakable desire for our salvation. Grant unto me to thirst ardently after Thine honour and the salvation of our souls, and cheerfully to spend myself wholly for them, according to Thy will. Grant that I may be held by no love for transitory things; that I may never cleave to any creatures, and those things which may be loved, I may love only in Thee; that I may truly love Thee with my soul above all things, and may rest in Thee alone. Amen.

It is finished.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O CHRIST, most loving to the human race, Who when duly consummating the work of our redemption, didst offer Thyself on the altar of the Cross as a holy Victim for the sins of all. Let this, I pray Thee, be the sole end of all my thoughts, words, and actions, that in all things I may seek Thy honour with an upright and simple intention, and desire nothing beside Thee. Grant that I may never grow lukewarm or weary in Thy service; but that, being renewed in fervour of spirit, I may day by day be more inflamed to love and praise Thee. Amen.

Jesus commends His Spirit to the Father.

Praise, honour, and glory be unto Thee, O CHRIST, Who didst willingly undergo death,

when, commending Thyself to the FATHER, Thou didst bow Thy adorable head and give up the ghost. So, by laying down Thy life for Thy sheep, Thou didst truly show Thyself to be the good Shepherd. Thou, O only-begotten SON of GOD, didst die! Thou didst die, O my Beloved, that I might live for ever. Oh, what great hope and confidence is laid up for me in Thy Death and in Thy Blood! I glorify Thee and give thanks to Thee to the utmost of my power. Grant me grace to die entirely to all sins and evil concupiscence, and to live to Thee alone, to think of Thee, and to exercise my understanding on Thee only, so that, fitly adorned with Thy grace and with holy charity, I may at the end of this life come at once to Thee, the true Paradise. O good JESUS, by Thy bitter Passion and Death, grant to the living pardon and grace, and to the faithful departed rest and eternal light. Amen.

For continual Advancement in Grace.[1]

Grant me, even me, my dearest LORD, to know Thee, and love Thee, and rejoice in Thee. And if I cannot do this perfectly in this life, let me at least advance to higher degrees every day, till I can come to do this in perfection. Let the knowledge of Thee increase in me here, that it may be full hereafter. I know, O LORD, that Thou art a GOD of truth; O make

[1] S. Augustine.

good Thy gracious promises to me, that my joy may be full. And till it be so, let my mind meditate, my tongue speak, my heart desire and love, my soul hunger, my flesh thirst after it, and my whole nature gasp and pant most earnestly till I actually enter into the joy of my LORD, there to remain for ever and ever.

A Prayer to the Holy Spirit.[1]

O HOLY SPIRIT, Love of GOD, Who proceedest from the Almighty FATHER and His most blessed SON, infuse Thy grace most plentifully into my heart. Come Thou and dwell in that soul that longs to be Thy Holy Temple. Heal the lurking distempers of my heart; pierce me through with the dart of Thy love, and kindle in me such a holy fire, that it may flame out in a bright and devout zeal and burn up all the dross of sensual affections, and possess and purify my whole spirit, and soul, and body. Grant this, O Blessed SPIRIT, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST our only LORD and SAVIOUR. Amen.

[1] S. Augustine.

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CLASSIFIED INDEX.

BIOGRAPHY.

Baines' Life of Archbishop Laud . . 2
Brechin's (Bp. of) Memoir of Helen Inglis . 4
Brett's Doctrine of the Cross . . . 5
—— Memorial of M. C. B. . . . 5
Brownlow's Memoir 6
Heygate's Memoir of Rev. J. Cook . . 15
Life of Sister Rosalie 33
Lives of Englishmen (4 Series) . . . 20
Memoir of M. E. D. and G. E. D. . 21
Memorial of Elizabeth A——. . . . 21
Newland's Memoir 25
Suckling's Memoir 35
Teale's Lives of Eminent Divines . 35
Walcott's Life of Bishop Hacket . . 15

BOOKS FOR THE SICK AND AFFLICTED.

Brett's Devotions for the Sick Room . 5
—— Companion for ditto 5
—— Instructions and Prayers for Sick . 5
Few Words to a Christian Mourner . 12
Manual for Mourners 21
Method of Assisting the Sick . . 21
Monro's Readings and Lessons for Sick Rooms 23
Prayers and Maxims, in Large Type . 24
Short Prayers for the Sick 24
Short Devotions from Prayer Book for do. . 9
Stretton's Guide to Sick and Dying . . 34

BOOKS FOR THE USE OF THE CLERGY.

Brechin's Memoriale Vitæ Sacerdotalis . 4
Devotional Aids for the Clergy . . 10
Newland's Essays on Confirmation . . 25
Paget's Memoranda Parochialia . . . 26
Parish and the Priest 27
Plenderleath's Priest's Visiting List . 27
Priest's Prayer Book 30
—— Responsal to 30
Questions for Self-Examination for Clergy 30
Sermons Register 32
Thompson's Concionalia 35
Visitatio Infirmorum 9

CATECHISMS AND CATECHETICAL WORKS.

Arden's Catechetical Manual . . . 2
Brechin's (Bp. of) First Catechism . . 4
Catechism on the Unity of the Church . 6
Catechism on the Incarnation . . . 17
Chanter's Exposition of the Catechism . 7
Catechism of the Chief Truths . . . 7
Church Catechism, illustrated . . . 8
Collects Catechetically Explained . . 9
Easy Catechism on the Old Testament . 11
Hicks' Lectures on the Incarnation . . 16
Holden's Anglican Catechist . . . 16
Hyde's Church Catechism with Notes . 17
—— Catechism with Easy Explanations . 17
John's Collects and Catechisings . . 17
John's Questions on the Pentateuch . . 18
Lea's Catechisings on the Prayer Book . 19
Malan's Exposition of the Creed . . . 20
Phipps' Catechism on the Holy Scriptures 27
Questions on Church Catechism . . 30
Questions on Christian Doctrine . . 30
Smith's Church Catechism 33
Stretton's Church Catechism explained . 34
—— Child's Catechism 34
—— Catechism of First Truths . . . 34
—— Brief Catechism of the Bible . . 34
Watson's Catechism on the Prayer Book . 37
West's Questions and Answers on Chief Truths 37
—— For Higher Classes 37

CHRISTIAN MEMORIALS.

Carter's Christian Gravestones . . . 6
Hallam's Monumental Memorials . . 15
Paget's Tract upon Tombstones . . . 26
Stride's Sketches for Christian Memorials . 34
Sunter's Designs for Headstones, &c. . 35

CHURCH HISTORY.

Blackmore's History of the Russian Church 3
Book of Church History 3
Brownlow's History of the Church . . 6
Mangin's Outline of Church History . . 21
Neale's History of the Eastern Church . 24
—— Voices from the East 24
Popoff's Council of Florence . . . 28
Pye's Short Ecclesiastical History . . 30
Wilkins' Lecture on Early Church History. 37

COMMENTARIES.

Acts of Apostles, Exposition of . . . 1
Book of Genesis, Exposition of . . . 3
Brechin's (Bp.) Commentary on Litany . 4
—— on Te Deum 4
—— on Canticles 4
—— on Penitential Psalms . . . 4
Cottage Commentary 9
Deane's Proper Lessons with Commentary 10
Ford's Commentary on the Gospels . . 13
—— on Acts 13
—— on Romans 13
Malan's Gospel of S. John 20
Neale's Commentary on the Psalms . . 24
—— on Hymnal Noted 25

CONFIRMATION.

Brechin's (Bp. of) Seal of the Lord . . 4
Brett's Guide to Confirmation . . .
Certificate of Confirmation . . .

Confirmation Medal 63
Kitt' Font to the Altar 11
Helps for Confirmation and Communion . 16
Illuminated Memorial of Confirmation . 63
Laying on of Hands 19
Milman's Meditations on Confirmation . 22
Monro's Preparation for Confirmation . 23
—— Manna's and Prayers ditto . 23
Newland's Confirmation and Communion . 25
Pott's Confirmation Lectures . . . 28
Suckling's Manual for Confirmation . . 35
Tracts on Confirmation 60

DEVOTIONAL BOOKS.

Brechin's (Bp.) Christian's Converse . 4
—— Nourishment of the Soul . . . 4
—— Meditations from Pinart . . . 4
—— Mirror of Young Christians . . 4
Brett's Meditations on the Life of our Lord 5
Brettingham's Devotions from the Psalms . 4
—— Anniversaries 4
Clarke's Watch Tower Book . . . 9
Daily Events of Holy Week . . . 10
Divine Master 10
Edmonstone's Portions of Psalms . . 11
—— Readings on Collects . . . 11
Eighty-fourth Psalm, Treatise on . . 11
Familiar Instructions on Prayer . . . 12
Gerhard's Meditations 29
Great Truths of the Christian Religion . 14
Heygate's Evening of Life 15
Holy Child Jesus 16
Holy Childhood of our Lord . . . 16
Kalendar of the Imitation 18
Kempis' Soliloquy of the Soul . . 18
—— Valley of Lilies 36
Ken's Practice of Divine Love . . . 10
Kettlewell's Companion for the Penitent 20
Legenda Domestica 19
Lowder's Penitent's Path 20
Malan's Meditations on the Passion . . 20
—— Meditations for Lent 20
Milman's Voices of Harvest 22
Monro's Readings for Holy Week . . 23
Paget's Christian's Day 26
Pathway of Faith 27
Patrick's Parable of the Pilgrim . . 27
Practice of the Presence of God . . . 27
Shipley's Daily Meditations . . . 32
—— Meditations for a Month . . . 32
Skinner's Heads of Christian Duty . . 33
Spiritual Voices from the Middle Ages . 33

ECCLESIOLOGY.

Best's Plea for Daily Worship . . . 2
Badger's Nestorians and their Rituals . 2
Book of Common Prayer (Sealed Book) . 3
Ditto Church of Scotland . . 3
Browne's Lecture on Symbolism . . . 5
Chamberlain's Chancel 51
Church Floral Decoration 8
Dickinson's List of Service Books . . 10
Directorium Scoticanum et Anglicanum . 27
Ecclesiastical Embroidery 11
Ecclesiological Society's Publications . 51
Ecclesiologist, the 11
Form of Consecration of Churches . . 13
for Laying Foundation Stone ditto . 13
Consecrating Cemetery Chapels . 13
History of Architecture . . . 14
Church Floral Decoration . . 14
Goodwin's Art of Polychrome . . . 14
Gresley's Treatise on English Church . 14
Handbook of Ecclesiology 11
Helmore's Church Choirs 15
Masters' List of Daily Services . . . 21
Maunsell's Church Bells and Ringing . 21
Neale's Introduction to Eastern Church . 24
—— Ecclesiology of the Isle of Man . 24
—— Church Tourists 24
Organs, a Short Account of. . . . 25
Perry's Lawful Church Ornaments . . 27
Poole's Churches described . . . 28
Popoff's Origin of Roman Liturgy . . 28
Pratt's Letters on Scandinavian Churches . 28
Reverence due to holy places . . . 31
Spelman's History of Sacrilege . . . 33
Sperling's Church Walks in Middlesex . 33
Walcott's Interior of a Gothic Minster . 36
—— Precinct of a Gothic Minster . 36
—— Cathedralia 36
Wilkins' Lecture on Church Music . . 37

EDUCATIONAL.

Bezant's Geographical Questions . . . 2
Key to ditto 2
Chamberlain's English Grammar . . . 7
Child's New Lesson Book 7
Couper's Hints on Management of Children 9
Easy Lessons for younger children . . 11
Ditto, Questions on 11
Finchley Manuals of Industry . . . 12
Hints on Early Education 16
Hopwood's School Geography . . . 16
—— Child's Geography 16
Johns' Dictation Lessons 17
Lessons for every day in the Week . . 19
Companion to ditto for Teacher . . . 19
Lessons in Grammar for a Child . . . 19
Sankey's Bible Exercises 31
—— Ditto, Teacher's Copy . . . 31
Sunday Alphabet 35
Wakefield's Charades from History, &c. . 36
—— Mental Exercises 36
Young Churchman's Alphabet . . . 38

EUCHARISTIC MANUALS.

Companion to Altar for Scottish Church . 9
Devotions for Choristers at Holy Communion 10
Devotions for Holy Communion . . . 10
Eucharistic Month 11
Form of Self-examination before Holy Communion 13
Guide to the Eucharist 8
Holy Eucharist, a Manual, &c. . . . 16
Laurence's Assistant at Holy Communion 19
Malan's Prayers for Holy Communion . 20
—— Preparation for Holy Communion . 20
Manual for Communicants 21
Nelson's Guide to the Holy Communion . 29
Prynne's Eucharistic Manual . . . 30
Scottish Communion Office in Greek . . 4
Scudamore's Steps to the Altar . . . 34
Shipley's Eucharistic Litanies . . . 32
—— Eucharistic Meditations . . . 32
—— Divine Liturgy 32
—— Spiritual Communion 32

FAMILY PRAYERS.

Book of Family Prayers from the Liturgy . 3
—— By a Layman 3
Carter's Family Prayers 6
Domestic Offices for the Use of Families . 10
Family Prayers by a Priest 12
Family Prayers for Children of the Church 12
Hooper's Prayers for Family Worship . 16
Monsell's Prayers and Litanies . . . 23
Morning and Evening Prayers for a Family 29
—— For a Household 23
Rose's Family Prayers 31
Short Services for Families . . . 33
Suckling's Family Prayers 35

HISTORY.

Arnold's History of Ireland . . . 18
Cranborne's History of France . . . 9
Flower's History of Scotland . . . 18
Fox's History of Rome 1h
Haskoll's History of France . . . 12
Jenkins' Annals of the Kings of Judah . 17
Johns' History of Spain 18
Moore's Easy Readings on England . . 23
Neale's English History 18
—— History of Greece 18
—— History of Portugal . . . 18
Poole's History of England . . . 28
Wilbraham's Kingdom of Judah . . . 37

HYMNS.

Hymns for Little Children 1
Hymns Descriptive and Devotional . . 1
Hymns for Infant Children 17
Hymns on Scripture Characters . . 17
Hymns of the Holy Feast 17
Narrative Hymns for Schools . . . 1
Neale's Mediæval Hymns 24
—— Hymns for the Sick 24
—— Hymns for Children 24
Poems on Old Testament Subjects . . 1
Raine's Verses for Church Schools . . 30
Williams' Hymns on the Catechism . . 38

HYMNS FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Anthems, Words of 1
Chamberlain's Hymns for Minor Festivals 7
Fallow's Psalms and Hymns . . . 29
Hymns and Introits 17
Stretton's Church Hymns 34

JUVENILE TALES.

Baines' Tales of the Empire . . . 2
Baron's Little Daughter, &c. . . . 1
Beginnings of Evil 2
Bishop's Little Daughter 2
Bonus's Beatrice 3
Chamberlain's Book of Anecdotes . . 7
Chapters on Plants 44
Chapters on Animals 44
Charcoal Burners 18
Charity at Home 7
Christmas Dream 8
Christmas Present for Children . . 8
Consecration and Desecration . . 9
Douglas' Mary and Mildred . . . 10
Drop in the Ocean 10
Dunster's Stories from Chroniclers . . 18
Early Friendship 18
Eccles' Midsummer Holydays . . . 11
Fanny's Flowers; or, Fun for the Nursery . 12
Five Tales of old Time 12
Flower's Classical Tales 13
—— Tales of Faith and Providence . 13
—— Tales for Leisure Hours . . 13
Flowers and Fruit 43
Forbes' Snowball and Other Tales . . 18
Fox's Noble Army of Martyrs . . . 14
—— Holy Church 14
Frederick Gordon 14
Going Home 14
Gould's Path of the Just 14
Grace Alford 33
Gresley's Henri de Clermont . . . 18
—— Colton Green 18
—— Holiday Tales 15
Heygate's Godfrey Davenant . . . 18
—— Ditto at College 18
Higher Claims 16
Holiday Hours 44
Ivo and Verena 17
Levett's Gentle Influence 19
Little Alice and her Sister . . . 19
Little Gardeners 19
Little Comforters 43
Manger of the Holy Night . . . 18
Memoirs of an Arm-chair 21
Minnie's Birthday 22
Mitchell's Hatherleigh Cross . . . 22
Moberley's Stories from Herodotus . . 22
Monro's Stories of Cottagers . . . 23
—— Harry and Archie 22
—— Pascal the Pilgrim 23
—— Lelia 22
Neale's Christian Heroism 18
—— Christian Endurance 18
—— Heathen Mythology 18
—— Followers of the LORD . . . 24
—— Lent Legends 24
—— Evenings at Sackville College . 24
—— Egyptian Wanderers . . . 24
—— Afternoons at an Orphanage . 24
Old Court House 25
Paget's Hope of the Katzekopfs . . . 18
—— Tales of Village Children . . 18
—— Luke Sharp 18
Parish Tales 27
Pearson's Stories on the Beatitudes . . 27
—— (H. D.) Stories of Christian Joy, &c. 27
Poynings: a Tale of 1688 18
Prisoners of Craigmacaire 30
Rainy Mornings with Aunt Mabel . . 30
Roberts' Snowbound in Cleeberrie Grange 31
Root of the Matter 31
Ruth Levison 31
Scholar's Nosegay 43
Stone's Ellen Merton 34
Stories for Young Servants . . . 34
Stories on the Commandments . . . 16
Stories on the Festivals, &c. . . . 43
Story of a Dream 34
Swedish Brothers 18
Tales of my Duty towards my Neighbour . 43
Tales to read to Myself 35
Tales of a London Parish 2
Vidal's Esther Merle 36
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Whytehead's College Life . . . 37

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Sacred 40
Secular 42

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. 19
of Israel . . . 20
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—— Concionalia 35
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—— Sermons on the Beatitudes . . 37
—— Sermons for Sundays 37
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Sunbeam, the 35
Tales of Crowbridge Workhouse . . . 35
Trevenan Court 36
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—— Maiden of Our Own Day 37
Wynnes, the 38

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—— Ordinance of Confession . . . 14
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—— Catholic Antidotes 15
Hicks' General View of the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration 16
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Incarnation, Tracts on 17
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—— Judgments on Baptism 17
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